

Sunday is not Sacred

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To be as clear as possible, I would like to begin by defining a term with roots in the sixteenth century which is rarely used today: “salvific faith.” I understand that salvific faith occurs when a person is prompted by the Holy Spirit to do something that is right and honorable in God’s sight, even if the price for obedience is significant. Additionally, the person is willing to trust in God and obey the Holy Spirit’s voice, leaving the consequences in God’s hands. For example, God commanded Noah to build an ark and the antediluvians ridiculed and scorned him for doing so. God commanded Abraham to leave his home and homeland, and he left not knowing where he was going! Nebuchadnezzar threw Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego into a fiery furnace because they believed the second commandment was obligatory, and their faith caused them to defy the king’s command to worship the golden image. These examples show that salvific faith is far more than intellectual assent; salvific faith involves a price for obeying God. (Hebrews 11)

I believe the Ten Commandments are obligatory and, for me, they are a matter of salvific faith. I accept them, both in their spiritual and physical sense, as God’s will. I have found, like Paul, I am unable to live in perfect compliance with them because my sinful nature rises up now and then and will not permit it. (Romans 7 and 8) Nevertheless, the Lord’s law is perfect and I love the covenant that the Ten Commandments represent. I eagerly look forward to the time when Jesus will remove my sinful nature and write His laws in my heart and mind. Then, I will be able to live in perfect harmony with Him and His perfect law forever! Until this transformation occurs, I live with this anticipation.

Even though I have closely studied the Bible on this topic and am intellectually settled on the matter, I have to accept by faith and Holy Spirit conviction that the observance of the fourth commandment is God’s will. Of course, I understand that most Christians do not share my conviction. They often excuse themselves from the obligation of the fourth commandment by saying, “the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross,” or “it doesn’t matter which day I keep holy as long as I worship God” or, “I worship God every day.” There is nothing in the Bible that forbids or requires worshipping God every day. However, there is a commandment that declares six days are secular and the seventh day of the week is holy. The Creator declares the seventh day is *unlike* the other six. The fourth commandment requires us to honor our Creator every Saturday by resting from work.

Consider four theological concepts which work together in perfect harmony: law, grace, faith, and obedience. These concepts do not cancel one another. God does not “give” with large print and then “take away” with fine print. The first concept in God’s government is His law. No one, including God Himself, is above the law. This means no one can violate the law without incurring the penalty of the law. God established His law before grace, faith, and obedience became possible. Actually, God’s law establishes the need for grace, faith, and obedience.

King David understood the primacy of God’s law. He wrote, **“The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The**

precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes." (Psalm 19:7,8) No individual can appreciate the depth of David's words unless the Holy Spirit opens that person's eyes and heart to understand them. Paul wrote, **"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."** (1 Corinthians 2:14)

After the apostle Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul understood that no man can achieve or produce the righteousness required for eternal life. He wrote, **"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'**" (Romans 1:17) Paul also understood that salvation was only possible through God's amazing grace (unmerited favor), **"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."** (Titus 2:11-13)

The Bible teaches that where there is no law, there is no sin. (Romans 4:15) This is common sense because a person cannot violate a non-existing law. The Bible says that sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4) and Paul says, **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** (Romans 3:23) Therefore, if we are sinners, God's laws are present.

Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10), but he only realized this fact after he was born again. Prior to his conversion, Paul thought that perfect obedience was the fulfillment of the law. (Philippians 3:4-6) Jesus was asked which law is the greatest. He responded, **" 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets [a phrase used to describe the Old Testament when Jesus was on Earth] hang on these two commandments."** (Matthew 22:37-40, insertion mine)

God's Law is a Covenant and a Promise

The Ten Commandments are both a law and a promise. For the sinful nature they are law, but for the spiritual nature they are a promise. God has promised to write His laws in our hearts and minds at the appointed time. (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:10,11) The Ten Commandments are called a covenant in the Old Testament (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13) because they reveal what love will do. The first four commandments reveal what love for God produces and the last six commandments reveal what love for our neighbors produces. When God's law is written in our hearts and minds and the sinful nature is replaced with the sinless nature Jesus originally gave to Adam and Eve, our thoughts, words, and actions will be in perfect harmony with the Ten Commandments!

The Ten Commandments are so important that Jesus Himself spoke them from Mt. Sinai. Contrary to what many Protestants claim, *all ten of them* are reiterated in the New Testament. For example, Paul affirmed the perpetuity of the fourth commandment about thirty years after

Jesus ascended saying, **“There remains, then, a [seventh day] 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 [on the seventh day].”** (Hebrews 4:9,10, insertions mine)

When Jesus died on the cross, God abolished the Levitical laws He gave to Israel. (Colossians 2:11-17) From the beginning, the Levitical laws included a sunset clause. When the Lamb of God died on the cross, the Levitical laws ended because God no longer required animal sacrifices. Many people think that animal sacrifices in the Old Testament actually brought salvation, but Paul says otherwise, **“it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”** (Hebrews 10:4)

God required Israel to sacrifice bulls, goats, and lambs until Jesus died so Israel could study the plan of salvation and understand “the reality of things to come.” (Colossians 2:17) God designed the ceremonial system, which required animal sacrifices, to serve as a carefully constructed “drama.” After Jesus died, there was no further need of it. The Levitical laws which also separated Jews from Gentiles were also abolished. Notice the wonderful result, **“But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far away [from truth and the joy of salvation] have been brought near through [faith in] the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two [separate nations into] one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the [Levitical] law with its commandments and regulations.**

His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two [separate nations], thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you [Gentiles] who were far away and peace to those [the Jews] who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you [Gentiles] are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people [all who are led by the Spirit] and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:13-20, insertions mine)

The Ten Commandments do not speak of eternal life because the purpose of the Ten Commandments is not salvation. God gave them to all mankind through Israel to define immorality. If a nation lives in harmony with the Ten Commandments, avoiding all forms of immoral conduct, everyone lives safely and happily! God also gave the Ten Commandments as a mirror so that we can compare our thoughts, words, and behavior with the intent of His laws. If we relate to God’s laws properly, they become beneficial. We can see our shortcomings and realize our daily need for the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to live better lives. (James 1:22-25) Finally, the Ten Commandments reveal what genuine love for God and neighbors will produce. No one who loves God will take His name in vain or worship an idol, and no one who loves his neighbor as himself will steal from him or commit murder. The Ten Commandments are the basis for the golden rule. Jesus said, **“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets [the Old Testament].”** (Matthew 7:12) Children should also be taught the inverse of the Golden Rule: As you do unto others, God shall do the same unto you. (Matthew 5:25,26; Romans 12:19;

Hebrews 10:30; Revelation 2:23)

A Legalist

When it comes to salvation, there are Old Testament legalists and New Testament legalists. An Old Testament legalist believes he *will be* saved through perfect obedience to God's law. Paul was an Old Testament legalist before his conversion. So was the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:17-23 who assumed he was without fault in God's sight. New Testament legalists believe they *have been* saved because they have done everything God requires for salvation. (Romans 10:10) Both forms of legalism are based on human effort or achievement even though the theology, behaviors, and beliefs are poles apart.

God's grace does not save us. Instead, His grace makes salvation possible. Millions of people (Revelation 20:8) will not receive eternal life because they chose to reject God's grace and violate the voice of the Holy Spirit. Our response to the Holy Spirit determines our eternal destiny. This is where salvific faith comes into focus. If we follow the voice of the Holy Spirit, we will suffer persecution. **"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."** (2 Timothy 3:12) Persecution is where salvific faith is tested!

When the Father sees a king or a pauper living by faith, He covers that person's sins with Jesus' righteousness (the sinless life of Jesus) because Jesus produced the righteousness necessary for eternal life when He was on Earth. (Romans 1:17) If we allow the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts, we will share King David's desire, **"I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight."** (Psalm 119:174) Remember, God's law is a spiritual matter. (Romans 7:14) When we love our neighbor enough that we would not steal anything that belongs to him, the intent of the law is fulfilled. Similarly, God's Sabbath is not for Old or New Testament legalists. If the Holy Spirit does not lead a person into joyfully observing God's seventh day Sabbath, there is no point of observing it. People who walk with God love walking with God! The consequences of walking with God usually end in persecution because He leads us away from the love of this world. (1 John 2:15)

Why Worship on Sunday?

For the past 2,000 years, Christians have challenged the importance of God's seventh day Sabbath with seven arguments purporting to make Sunday "the Lord's day." However, if we consider each argument on its merits, we come to the opposite conclusion. I believe the seven arguments used to exalt Sunday sacredness actually ruin the prospect of it! However, each person has to look at the evidence and determine for himself whether or not the Bible actually supports the claim that God transferred the sacredness of His seventh day Sabbath to the first day of the week.

Argument 1. The Holy Spirit Came on Sunday

Some people maintain that according to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was given to the church on the Day of Pentecost, which fell on a Sunday; and this event, they say, affirms the sacredness of

Sunday.

According to Leviticus 23, the Feast of Pentecost (feast of the 50th day) *always* fell on a Sunday. The countdown to Pentecost began on the first Sunday after Passover week ended. The Jews celebrated the 50th day after seven full weeks of 49 days had passed. This means they observed the Feast of Pentecost on a Sunday for more than 1,400 years *before* the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost in A.D. 30. Does the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in A.D. 30 suddenly affirm the sacredness of Sunday? If so, why is the Creator totally silent about this transition? Thousands of people attended the Feast of Pentecost in A.D. 30 and they spoke many languages because they came from many nations. *All* of them were Jews and observed the seventh day Sabbath, so why does the Bible say nothing about the sacredness of Sunday if Sunday suddenly became a holy day?

Sometime after the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at the Feast of Pentecost, God sent Peter to the home of a Gentile named Cornelius. (Acts 10:44-47) After Cornelius heard the gospel of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon him and his family *in the same way* that it came upon the disciples at Pentecost. (Acts 15:7-11) Again, the Bible says nothing in Acts 10 about the sacredness of Sunday or that the fourth commandment had been abolished. When Peter reported his visit to church leaders a dozen years later, he said nothing about making Sunday a sacred day when he described the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost or in the home of Cornelius. (Acts 15)

After Peter's meeting with Cornelius, Paul met twelve men at Ephesus who had been baptized but had not received the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul laid hands on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:1-7) just as the disciples did at Pentecost. The Bible records nothing in Acts 19 about the sacredness of Sunday or the fourth commandment being terminated. In fact, the Bible says in the following verses (Acts 19:8-12) that Paul boldly went into the synagogue for three months to preach on the kingdom of God, and when the Jews would not tolerate his teaching, he moved to the lecture hall of Tyrannus where he met "*daily*" with the people for two years. Paul said nothing about Sunday being a holy day for two years! There is only one way this is possible. Paul had no idea that Sunday was a sacred day!

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem at Pentecost, in the house of Cornelius, or in Ephesus did not terminate the fourth commandment. The Ten Commandments cannot be abolished without a plain "thus saith the Creator" and there is no such statement in the New Testament. The fourth commandment cannot be separated from the other nine; they come as a package of ten promises. They are a covenant and all *ten* promises are kept in the Ark of His Covenant. Twenty-five years after Jesus ascended to Heaven, James wrote this: "**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) James would not have referred to two of the Ten Commandments if they had been nailed to the cross a quarter of a century earlier. James would not speak of the *whole* law if some of the commandments were no longer obligatory.

Argument 1 does not support the sacredness of Sunday.

Argument 2. Three Thousand People were Baptized on Sunday

The Bible indicates about three thousand people were baptized at the Feast of Pentecost in A.D. 30. (Acts 2:41) For some people, these baptisms affirm that Sunday was sacred. They reason that on the day of Pentecost, the New Testament church gave the first message (Acts 2:14), the first converts were added to the church, and the first baptism of believers occurred. (Acts 2:37) All of these “firsts” were wonderful, but wonderful things do not affect the fourth commandment. If God Himself declares a specific day holy, only He can annul or change its holiness.

A baptism or a wedding on a Sunday, Tuesday, or Wednesday does not make it a holy day. Jesus suffered and died on Friday, but that does not make Friday a holy day. A prayer meeting on Wednesday or an Agape Feast on Friday night do not make those days holy. Even if John the Baptist baptized Jesus on a Sunday, this could not make Sunday holy. As far as we can tell, John the Baptist baptized people every day of the week! (Mark 1)

Argument 2 fails because the Creator has said nothing that suggests or indicates that a day becomes holy because people are baptized on it.

Argument 3. Jesus Was Resurrected on Sunday

Some Christians claim Jesus’ resurrection on the first day of the week makes Sunday a holy day. God would not unravel the fourth commandment and transfer the holiness of the seventh day to the first day without telling Sabbath keeping believers about it! This claim has no Scriptural support.

Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene early on Sunday morning (John 20:1). Then, He ascended to the Father (John 20:17) and drove Lucifer out of Heaven. (Revelation 12:7-9) That afternoon, Jesus returned to Earth and joined two disciples as they were walking back to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-31) After this, He appeared to the disciples who were meeting in a secure place, hiding from the Jews. (John 20:19) Later on, Jesus also appeared to His disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. (John 21:1) On one occasion after His resurrection, Jesus appeared before a crowd of over five hundred people! (1 Corinthians 15:6) Given the exposure that Jesus had during the 40 days He was on Earth after His resurrection, why did He say nothing about the sacredness of Sunday? This silence is puzzling because we know that His followers were 99.9% Jewish. If the Ten Commandments had been nailed to the cross when Jesus died, surely something as dramatic as abolishing the Sabbath and making Sunday a holy day was discussed; there is no such discussion in the Bible.

Consider the Sunday afternoon that Jesus walked to Emmaus with His disciples. Luke 24:13 indicates the distance between Jerusalem and Emmaus was seven miles. According to the Bible, they arrived in Emmaus as the day was “nearly over” (Luke 24:29) and when they were about to eat, the disciples discovered that it was Jesus who had walked with them. However, before they could begin eating, Jesus disappeared. They became so excited that they returned to Jerusalem that *same* evening, arriving after dark to tell the rest of the disciples that they had

actually seen Jesus! (Luke 24:33)

Luke's account suggests that Jesus and His disciples did not regard Sunday as a holy day because they would not have walked seven miles if it were considered a holy day. According to Acts 1:12, the Jews believed a Sabbath day's walk could be no more than two miles; the distance from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. Moreover, Jesus did not declare "Resurrection Sunday" would be a holy day before He was crucified, and a few hours after His resurrection, He did not say anything about it on the road to Emmaus. Why would there be total silence on such a profound change if, indeed, such a change had occurred? Can you imagine observing Sunday as a holy day all of your life and suddenly switching to Saturday without any discussion or questions?

On Thursday, three days before walking with His disciples to Emmaus, Jesus and His disciples sat on the Mount of Olives. The disciples were anxious to know about the end of the world (Matthew 24:3) and, responding to their concerns, Jesus gave two prophecies. The first prophecy pertained to the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem which was about forty years away (A.D. 70), and the second prophecy pertained to the end of the world. Speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus said, "**Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.**" (Matthew 24:20) If Jesus, the Creator of the Sabbath, foreknew that its sacredness would be transferred to Sunday in a mere three days, He would not have encouraged His disciples to pray so that they would not have to travel forty years later on the Sabbath.

Finally, if God declared a transition from Sabbath to Sunday during the first century A.D., the New Testament would have had much to say about it. We know that Jesus chose Paul, one man speaking with one voice, to extract Christianity from the cradle of Judaism. As a Pharisee, Paul was highly educated in the economy of Judaism. After Paul's conversion, Jesus revealed many things to Paul that would otherwise be unknown. Armed with both his earthly and heavenly education, Paul faced an enormous amount of controversy during the years of his ministry. His main problem with the Jews was getting them to understand that salvation comes through faith instead of legalism. He wrestled with Jewish converts constantly over conflicts such as circumcision, (Acts 15:1,2) eating food offered to idols, (Acts 15:20,29; 1 Corinthians 8:1-4) and the observance of feast days.

Many Christians today are confused about observing the feast days God gave to ancient Israel. Some people advocate the idea that Christians should observe the feasts. For example, they will often use Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 5:8 to justify observing Passover. Paul wrote, "**Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.**" If we interpret Paul's comments to mean that Christians should "keep the Festival" of Passover, then Paul's theology becomes internally conflicted. This would force Paul into saying one thing in one place and then canceling it by making a contrary statement in another place. We would not know which of Paul's statements to believe.

Peter wrote that Paul's writings can be difficult to understand and many people distort them "**to their own destruction.**"

(2 Peter 3:16) For us to understand Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 5 about keeping the Festival of Passover, we first have to understand Paul's attitude and behavior. He wrote, **"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win [to Christ] as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law [the Ten Commandments] but am under Christ's law [which says, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34,35], so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."**

(1 Corinthians 9:19-23, insertions mine)

When he was among the Jews, Paul was willing to "go along" with Jewish customs even though he previously was in bondage to them (Philippians 3:4-7), but through Christ he had become "free of them." (Acts 21:21-40) When Paul was among Gentiles who ate food offered to idols, he also ate food offered to idols because he knew that an idol was nothing. (1 Corinthians 8:4-7) His flip-flop behavior deeply offended the Jews, especially those who wanted to diminish or abolish his gospel.

After Paul was converted, he spent three years in the desert. (Galatians 1:17,18) While there, Jesus revealed many things to him that could not otherwise be known. (Ephesians 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 12:1-9) Jesus explained to Paul that the Father had abolished the Levitical system; that is, God abolished the *drama* He originally gave Israel with all of its ceremonial services and nailed it to the cross. These revelations explain how and why Paul could say to Jews who wanted to become Christians, **"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.*"** (Colossians 2:16,17, italics mine)

It was very difficult for Jewish converts, steeped in the intricate traditions of Judaism, to let their cherished customs go when uniting with the church that Jesus established. The Bible provides a good example which occurred about fifteen years after Jesus ascended to Heaven. **"When Peter came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain [leading] men came from [Jerusalem, sent by] James [the president of the newly formed Christian Church], he [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived [from Jerusalem], he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group [many early Jewish converts insisted that all believers in Christ must be circumcised in order to be saved - Acts 15:1,2]. The other Jews [who lived in Antioch] joined him [Peter] in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even [Paul's partner] Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, 'You are a Jew, yet you [have freedom through Christ to] live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you [suddenly] force [these] Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?**

We who are Jews by birth [and proud of it] and not [the poor lowly] ‘Gentile sinners’ [now] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we [proud Jews], too, have [been scolded, we must] put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the [Levitical] law, because by observing the law [any law] no one will be justified.” (Galatians 2:11-16, insertions mine)

Paul knew the ceremonial system: animal sacrifices, new moon feasts, and annual feasts (Sabbaths), were shadows of things that pointed to Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection. After Jesus came to Earth, lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and ascended to the Father, the Father abolished the ceremonial system. Therefore, when Paul was among the Jews, he went along with their religious traditions to win them to Christ because the ceremonies no longer meant anything to him. When Paul was among the Gentiles, he ate food offered to idols in order to win them to Christ, because the idol is nothing and food meant nothing. If you consider the context in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul actually scolds the church at Corinth for trying to remain Jewish and for keeping the Festival. His words are often removed from their context so that he appears to endorse the very practice he is discouraging! He said, **“Your [earlier] boasting [1 Corinthians 4:18] is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast [yeast was prohibited during the Feast of Unleavened Bread because yeast represented sin] works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast [in your hearts] that you may be a new batch without yeast -- as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.** [So what are you now celebrating? The reason for observing the feast is behind us. It has been fulfilled!] **Therefore let us keep the [spirit of the] Festival [alive in our hearts], not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.”** (1 Corinthians 5:6-8, insertions mine)

Paul used a metaphor to say, “If you insist on keeping the Passover, it is foolish because our Passover Lamb [that is, the Passover Lamb of believers in Jesus] has been sacrificed. Therefore, observe and keep the true meaning of the Festival by living a life that is pleasing and acceptable to Jesus by eating the bread of sincerity and truth.” The Biblical truth that eliminates the observance of the feasts post-Calvary is simple: *One cannot observe the feasts without first meeting the specifications required for the feasts by Levitical law.* After Paul understood that the Father had appointed Jesus (from the tribe of Judah) as the High Priest of sinners, the Levitical law had to be abolished. **“For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law.”** (Hebrews 7:12)

Contrary to what most Christian scholars say, the context of Galatians 4:10-13, Colossians 2:16, and Romans 14:5,6, does not concern the fourth commandment or the observance of the seventh day Sabbath. The issue is the observance of “feast days.” Israel’s feast days fell throughout the week and were also called “Sabbaths” (Leviticus 16:31) because God forbade Israel from working on them. When a feast day and the seventh day occurred on the same day, it was called a “high Sabbath” or a “special Sabbath.” (John 19:31)

Finally, there is no mention of any controversy concerning the sacredness of Sunday in the New Testament. This silence indicates there was *no* controversy during the first century because most, if not all, of the New Testament was written in the last half of the first century. These points add up to only one conclusion: Jesus’ resurrection on Sunday did not change or abolish

the holiness of the seventh day.

Argument 3 does not establish the sacredness of Sunday.

Argument 4. Paul Ate at the Lord's Table on Sunday

Some Christians appeal to Paul's actions at Troas to support the sacredness of Sunday. They maintain that Paul preached and believers partook of the Lord's Table (Lord's Supper) on the first day of the week. (Acts 20:7)

If I were advocating for the sacredness of Sunday, I would not use Acts 20:7 because this argument *always* backfires when *all* of the facts are considered. To begin, the Bible says: **“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. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting.”** (Acts 20:7,8) The first day of the week began at sundown in Bible times. (Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32; John 19:31) Therefore, Paul met with the believers in Troas after the Sabbath had passed and as the first day of the week began. Paul began speaking at sundown and he preached until midnight (about six hours).

Consider three facts about this meeting:

1. Advocates for Sunday sacredness claim “the believers partook of the Lord's Table,” but Acts 20 does not say anything about eating at the Lord's Table or partaking in the Lord's Supper. The text says they “came together to break bread.” Breaking bread does not necessarily mean partaking of the Lord's Table. “Breaking bread” is a Biblical expression for sharing or eating a meal. (Luke 24:35; Acts 27:35) Notice this passage which describes the activities of the apostles and church members after the Feast of Pentecost passed. **“Every day they [the apostles and believers] continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”** (Acts 2:46,47, insertion mine)

An accident at midnight interrupted Paul's preaching in Troas. Eutychus went to sleep sitting in a window and fell to the ground from the third story. The fall killed Eutychus, but the Holy Spirit brought him to life through Paul. After this miraculous event occurred, Paul went back upstairs, *broke bread again* and continued talking until daylight. At daybreak (Sunday morning at daylight), Paul left Troas with his traveling associates because he and his associates did not regard Sunday as a holy day! (Acts 20:9-13) Does partaking of “the Lord's Table” on Sunday make Sunday a holy day? Before you answer, do not forget that Jesus and His disciples “broke bread” in the upper room and ate the “Lord's Supper” on a Thursday night. (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) When comparing the actions of Jesus and His disciples with Paul and his associates, whose example is more important? Does either example make a holy day? If so, we would have to choose Thursday as a holy day.

2. Acts 20:7 does not describe a regular church service. The Bible says Paul regularly worshiped on the seventh day Sabbath. (Acts 16:13; 17:2; 18:4; 19:8) The situation in Acts 20:7 is a farewell meeting, not a holy day worship service. The meeting was held during Paul's final hours in Troas because many of the believers suspected it would be the last time they would see him.
3. Finally, is it possible that two meals and a farewell talk in Troas could make Sunday a holy day? Does any man have the power and authority to void any law of God? The Bible says that Paul left Troas at daylight on Sunday morning (Acts 20:11). How could Paul teach that Sunday was a sacred day and then continue his journey on Sunday? The evidence in Acts 20 supports one conclusion: Paul and his traveling associates did not consider the first day of the week to be a holy day, even fifteen years after Christ's ascension.

Argument 4 does not support the sacredness of Sunday.

Argument 5. Paul Encouraged Believers to Bring Their Offerings on Sunday

Another Bible reference often used to affirm the sacredness of Sunday is 1 Corinthians 16:2. It is claimed that Paul instructed the believers in Corinth to bring their offerings to the Lord on the first day of the week. Advocates for Sunday worship maintain believers were obviously assembling on that day. Here's the passage: **"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)

Paul made this request while travelling for two reasons. First, barter was the nature and order of business in those days. Paul could not sail to Jerusalem with donated animals, produce, grains, and other material goods. Therefore, He asked that all donations be converted into cash *before* he arrived in Corinth. Second, Paul did not want believers in Corinth to wait until he arrived and then rush and convert their possessions into cash; He knew it would be time consuming and foolish because hurriedly exchanging goods for cash means less cash. So, Paul wisely advised that believers start on Sunday of each week, which Paul regarded as a regular work day, to begin the process of converting possessions into money at a good exchange rate.

Does Paul's request to the believers in Corinth support the sacredness of Sunday? No...not at all. If a person wanted to send a gift to the suffering saints in Jerusalem, Paul advocated taking care of business starting on Sunday, the first day of the week, a regular workday.

Argument 5 does not support Sunday sacredness.

Argument 6. Early Christians Worshiped on "The Lord's Day"

Some advocates for Sunday worship will admit that political history could have influenced a disregard for Sabbath worship and exalted the observance of Sunday as a holy day. However, realizing that Sunday sacredness requires divine authority, they reject the idea that Roman Emperor Constantine could have changed the day for worship from Sabbath to Sunday. They also reject the idea that the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363-365) could have changed the day of worship. These advocates often use the argument that “early Christians observed Sunday” because early on, they called Sunday “the Lord’s Day.”

There is only one text in the Bible that suggests which day of the week is “the Lord’s day.” It is the seventh day Sabbath: “**And He [Jesus] said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.**” (Mark 2:27,28, insertion and italics mine) Jesus uttered these words after some Pharisees condemned Him and His disciples for picking ears of grain as they walked through a grain field on the Sabbath. “**The Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?’**” (Mark 2:24)

Jesus condemned their legalism by putting the topic of Sabbath observance in proper perspective. First, He forced them to admit that long ago, King David and his companions had eaten the consecrated bread from the temple without incurring guilt. (Mark 2:25,26) This happened because King David’s need for food was greater than the priest’s entitlement to it. Using this principle, Jesus made the point that picking ears of grain on the Sabbath while walking through the field was not considered working. The Sabbath was made for man’s benefit. He and His disciples were hungry and food was within easy reach. Contrary to what the Pharisees thought, the Sabbath was not created as an object of worship; instead, Jesus wants man to worship the Creator on His Sabbath day! Then, Jesus speaking as the Creator declared, “**Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.**” Jesus meant, “I not only made the Sabbath for man’s benefit, my conduct as the Lord of the Sabbath also shows how the Sabbath is to be observed!”

It is true that both Sabbath and Sunday were called “the Lord’s Day” in early church history, and there is an interesting reason for this. In A.D. 70, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and took the surviving Jews back to Rome to work as slaves. The Romans intensely hated the Jews and they considered followers of Christ to be a sect of Jews; after all, Jesus was a Jew. Therefore, Christians sought to distance themselves from their Jewish identity in various ways. One technique was to call the Sabbath, “the Lord’s day.” Since a Jew would never call the Sabbath, “the Lord’s Day,” this was a good way to maintain distinction. About A.D. 95, when John was exiled to the island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus, he was given a great vision on the Sabbath and John used the phrase, “the Lord’s Day:” “**On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: ‘Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches:’**” (Revelation 1:10,11, italics mine)

Meanwhile in Rome, many Romans worshiped on Sunday; it was a weekly holiday for recognizing and celebrating Mithra, a Roman Sun God. Romans observed Sunday in a manner unlike the strict and legalistic way the Jews observed the Sabbath. Over time, Christians in Rome, to avoid any association with Judaism, began to amalgamate their beliefs with the

followers of Mithra and call Sunday “the Lord’s Day.” Their reasoning was that Jesus came from the tomb on Sunday.

“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, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library/The First Apology of Justin Martyr*, (Boston 1887) p. 187, Chap 67) This is the first recorded instance of early Christians justifying the sacredness of Sunday. The justification Martyr used for holding a common assembly on Sunday is interesting. First, he cited the separation of darkness and light on the first day of Creation as grounds for holding a common assembly, and then he refers to the resurrection of Jesus. Martyr offered no Scriptural authority for assembling on Sunday, but his remarks indicate how he justified meeting on Sunday. Justin Martyr wrote this remark in A.D. 150 and today, millions of Christians erroneously think that “the Lord’s Day” is Sunday. Certainly, this is a long-held tradition, but the association of the Lord’s Day with Sunday is based on Jewish aversion rather than Scripture.

Argument 6 does not support the sacredness of Sunday.

Argument 7: Early Christian Believers Met on Sunday

Another argument used to affirm the sacredness of Sunday is created from “cherry picking” the writings of early church fathers such as Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Didache, Ignatius, Dionysius, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. This argument maintains these writers affirmed that early Christians met on Sunday for worship. This approach to the problem of Sunday sacredness is a smoke screen to hide the fact that the New Testament says nothing about Sunday becoming a holy day. Everyone knows that if certain historical facts are kept from sight, people can twist them to create a skewed view of history and make it be whatever they want. However, when all of the historical facts are presented, they tell a very different story than what is often represented as history.

During the first century A.D., Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire because of persecution. Christians were constantly on the move to escape capture, confiscation, punishment, and death. For a while, each Caesar seemed to be more intent on destroying Jews and Christians than his predecessor. Therefore, early Christians made theological compromises to survive. During the second century A.D., Judaism’s influence over Christianity in Italy had faded because three or four generations of Roman-born Christians had come and gone. Jerusalem was a non-important heap of ruins and Christians wanted their own religious identity – an identity that had nothing to do with the Jews.

To make matters worse, many Gentiles had “joined the church” and brought their peculiar religious baggage. Consequently, Christianity in Rome mutated into a Romanesque version, which was unlike Christianity in other parts of the world. By A.D. 150, 120 years after Jesus ascended, Christians, in Rome, had found areas where compromise was possible with Mithraism. This led to theological ecumenism and apostasy. Many Christian denominations are participating in a similar process today and again, the result will be awful.

When Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Christianity was deprived of its headquarters and “main office.” Each church quickly found itself alone and became its own authority in matters of faith and doctrine. Early Church history indicates that Christians *adjusted* beliefs and doctrines as needed, depending on location and leadership. During the last part of the second century A.D., Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons, located in what is now called France, became alarmed with the heresies that had infiltrated the Christian movement. He was aware of how Christians in Rome had begun to meet on Sunday and abandoned the seventh day Sabbath, and he spoke against it. He wrote: “For He [Christ] did not make void, but fulfilled the law [Ten Commandments].” (Irenaeus, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/Against Heresies, Vol 1*, (Boston, 1887) p. 471, insertions mine)

Tertullian, another early church father, wrote extensively concerning Christian doctrine. He, like Irenaeus, was alarmed at the practices of certain Christians, especially those in Rome. In regards 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, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/Book IV, Chap 12, Vol 3*, (Boston, 1887) p. 362, insertion mine)

Debate over Sunday observance grew in those early years because the church in Rome defended the practice. Bishop Archelaus responded to bishop Manes, saying: “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, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/The Disputation with Manes, Vol 4*, (Boston, 1887) p. 217, insertions mine)

By A.D. 320, confusion and compromise had devastated many early Christian beliefs. Christians in Alexandria, Egypt were defending views on the deity of Jesus that opposed the church in Rome. The Christian leaders discussed, debated, and argued the need for centralized church authority and leadership. Many agreed that church doctrine needed to be defined and protected so that heresy would not destroy Christianity, but they could not agree on a process or who would do the job best.

Poor communication, distance, differences in culture, education, language, and social factors began to define Christianity according to geography. It was easy to see the result would be a highly fractured church. Both the world and Christianity needed a strong unifying leader and Constantine concluded he was “the chosen one!” He believed God had divinely appointed him to rescue a crumbling Roman empire and the universal Christian Church. When Constantine ascended to the throne as sole ruler of the empire, about A.D. 312, he had transformed himself into a Christian for political advantage. Constantine was clever and saw Christianity as a means of unifying an ethnically and religiously diverse empire. When he endorsed the version of Christianity that was centered in Rome, he set a sequence of events in motion that could not have been imagined.

To put the empire on notice that Constantine had established a new world order, he had his army baptized into Christianity by marching them through a river. Then, to promote a universal day for worship, he implemented a Sunday law in March, A.D. 321 as a political compromise.

Constantine patronized everyone by declaring a weekly holy day/holiday. His Sunday law meshed with customary Roman practice and it aligned with the desires of the church at Rome. Even non-Christians were quite happy with a national day of rest. “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) Did you notice that Constantine’s decree *did not* mandate worship on Sunday?

Although Christians in Rome had been meeting on Sunday for more than a century when Constantine announced his decree, other Christians around the Mediterranean Sea were not overjoyed. Most of the Christians outside Rome 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, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library/Ecclesiastical History, Book V, chap 22, Vol II*, (Boston, 1887) p. 132)

Constantine’s decree did not abolish 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 a doctrine that dealt directly with the “Lord’s Day” to present a strong case before a contentious and divided body of Christians. Eusebius, another apologist (peacemaker) of the era, was a Christian confidant and advisor of Constantine. He masterminded a doctrine for Sunday observance that remains intact for Catholics today. 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. [in other words], 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*, Psalm 92, quoted in *The Literature of the Sabbath* by Robert Cox, Vol I, p. 361, italics and insertions mine)

Did you notice the last two sentences in Eusebius’ argument? Eusebius testifies that “we” (Constantine and the leaders of the church) “have transferred all things, whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath” to Sunday. Eusebius offered no Scriptural authority for this change

because there is none. Additionally, no church father or council from that time-period challenged or affirmed Eusebius' claims. As it turned out, Eusebius took the thorny problem of worship in hand and became the father of a heresy that favored the apostate practices of the church in Rome. When a mere mortal, no matter how well-intentioned, declares by his own authority that the law of an eternal Almighty God is null and void, he is both delusional and evil.

Centuries later, the writings of Eusebius created a huge problem for Protestants. Catholics do not question the sacredness of Sunday because they believe the Church has the authority to change God's laws. They believe Jesus gave this authority to Peter and his successors. (Matthew 16:19) On the other hand, Protestants have had to scramble for answers, because they insist their faith and doctrine is based solely on the Word of God, but there is no biblical support for their Sunday-keeping arguments. Even though their reasoning is different, Catholics and Protestants abolished the Sabbath and substituted Sunday in its place. Who has higher authority – the Creator or the created?

One man says, "Every day is holy, I worship God every day of the week."

Another man says, "It does not matter which day we worship on as long as we worship God." Such comments show no regard for the Creator's authority. If Jesus were on Earth today, He would say of most Christians the same thing He said of the Jews, "**They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.**" (Matthew 15:9)

Argument 7 does not support the sacredness of Sunday. It does explain how apostasy overtook Christianity.

Summary

We have examined seven common arguments used to rationalize the sacredness of Sunday. None of these arguments are valid. When it comes to embracing the fourth commandment, Christians generally face three obstacles:

1. **Christian Culture.** Ever since the second century A.D., Christians in Rome have been advocating Sunday worship. Today, nearly two billion Catholics and Protestants worship on Sunday, regarding Sunday to be "the Lord's day" when there is no support for it in Scripture. Therefore, going against mainstream Christian culture and the opinions of "experts," who hold advanced degrees from seminaries, is difficult for an ordinary person. Those who insist on keeping the seventh day holy are often regarded as contemptible legalists who know nothing about the Bible or God's grace.
2. **Lack of Knowledge.** Because Catholics and a majority of Protestants worship on Sunday, very few Christians have had any reason to question or examine the root cause of Sunday worship. Moreover, many people worshiping on Sunday do not regard Sunday as a "sacred day." For them, Sunday is a day for "common assembly," that is, going to church; other than that, Sunday is a day for recreation, working, or doing whatever a person wants or needs to do. This disconnect from the sacredness of the seventh day Sabbath has created the following justification: "The fourth commandments

does not really matter as long as we worship God and maintain a close relationship with Him.”

I think most Christians agree that one can worship the Lord every day of the week, but the requirement stated in the fourth commandment is altogether another matter. The fourth commandment demands that we cease from our labors and rest *on the seventh day* that begins Friday at sundown and ends at sundown on Sabbath. (Leviticus 23:32) The Lord commands that those who are within our gates such as employees, servants, or anyone under our control must also rest. The fourth commandment does not produce a weekly holiday. It produces a holy day, a day *unlike* the other six. The Sabbath is for spending time with God, with fellow believers (Leviticus 23:3), and for hearing the Word of God. God’s Sabbath is a day for denying the selfish desires of the sinful nature. (Isaiah 58:13,14)

Most of us who observe the seventh day as a holy day, find it awkward and difficult at times to deal with the ways of the world, even when living within a Christian culture and heritage. Those of us living in the United States have enjoyed religious freedom for a long time, and it is sobering to think that persecution is coming when the seven-headed beast appears. If we add the pressures of social stigma and the hostile consequences that can come for being a Sabbath keeper, some Christians think that it is best to just leave the Sabbath issue alone. It is easier “to go along and get along” than to lose a job, a spouse, and perhaps become a social outcast within your own family. However, Jesus said, **“If anyone loves Me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent Me.”** (John 14:23,24)

3. **Sinful nature.** The biggest hurdle for all mankind regarding God’s seventh day Sabbath is our sinful nature. We are *naturally* opposed to doing whatever God commands. Paul wrote, **“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”** (Romans 8:5-7)

When these three obstacles are combined they are formidable, but we can overcome the world through faith because Jesus overcame the world. (John 16:33) He will give every sinner the strength to do what is right, if we ask for it. This is where salvific faith comes into focus. Faith in God is required for everyone who desires salvation.

If you feel impressed by the Holy Spirit to embrace and enter into God’s Sabbath rest, pray about it and ask Jesus for the wisdom, strength, and courage to proceed. He rewards those who live by faith. (Hebrews 11:6) Jesus said, **“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”** (John 16:13,14)

This study concludes with the inspiring words of Oswald Chambers (1874-1917): “The moral

law does not consider our weaknesses as human beings; in fact, it does not take into account our heredity or infirmities. It simply demands that we be absolutely moral. The moral law never changes, either for the highest of society or for the weakest in the world. It is enduring and eternally the same. The moral law, ordained by God, does not make itself weak to the weak by excusing our shortcomings. It remains absolute for all time and eternity. If we are not aware of this, it is because we are less than alive. Once we do realize it, our life immediately becomes a fatal tragedy. 'I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died' (Romans 7:9). The moment we realize this, the Spirit of God convicts us of sin. Until a person gets there and sees that there is no hope, the Cross of Christ remains absurd to him. Conviction of sin always brings a fearful, confining sense of the law. It makes a person hopeless '...sold under sin' (Romans 7:14). I, a guilty sinner, can never work to get right with God – it is impossible. There is only one way by which I can get right with God, and that is through the death of Jesus Christ. I must get rid of the underlying idea that I can ever be right with God because of my obedience. Who of us could ever obey God to absolute perfection?! We only begin to realize the power of the moral law once we see that it comes with a condition and a promise. But God never coerces us. Sometimes we wish He would make us be obedient, and at other times we wish He would leave us alone. Whenever God's will is in complete control, He removes all pressure. And when we deliberately choose to obey Him, He will reach to the remotest star and to the ends of the earth to assist us with all of His almighty power." (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest, The Law and The Gospel*, December 1)

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