

The Bible Sabbath

Ned Ashton

www.ThreeAngels.com.au

A General Review of the Sabbath Controversy

By NED S. ASHTON
REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
www.rhpa.org

No Copyright

THE BIBLE SABBATH

THE Sabbath has been thrown into the arena of debate perhaps more than any other religious question. The foes of the true Sabbath have appeared almost from the beginning of Biblical record, and through the ages different phases of the subject have been controverted. Today the issue is over the right day to be observed. On this question the Christian world is divided into two camps.

On the one side are the Seventh-day Adventists, the Seventh Day Baptists, and the Jews, who observe, in harmony with the fourth commandment, the seventh day of the week, commonly called Saturday.

On the other side are the various Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church, who observe the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday. The latter, of course, form the large majority of professed Christians. Many people stress this point of majority very heavily. It is easy for people to follow the multitude, and to console themselves with the thought that it must be right, or so many good Christians would not be going that way. But as this is a question of truth or error, it cannot be decided on the basis of numbers.

The history of the past furnishes some striking lessons on this point, and shows that truth has always been unpopular and has been followed by the minority. Many instances could be brought forward in proof of this.

For example, Noah and his family were in the small minority in believing and teaching the message God had communicated to him, that He would destroy the earth with a flood. And though Noah preached for 120 years, the world at large refused to believe his message. Nevertheless the flood came, and all but eight souls perished, a striking instance of where the minority was right and the majority wrong.

An equally striking example is furnished us in the first advent of Christ. How many, even of the chosen people of God, believed in Him and accepted Him as God's Messiah? A small minority indeed. Yet He was the Holy One of Israel, the promised Seed. And though He gave ample proof of His divinity, the great majority rejected Him as the Son of God, and crucified Him as an impostor. A few, it is true, a very few, believed in Him and followed Him. Nevertheless He was right, and the majority were wrong. Even today the followers of Christ form a very small part of the peoples of civilized lands, to say nothing of the great world of unbelievers. If we were to decide a question on the basis of numbers, then we would have to give up Christianity and become Mohammedans, for they outnumber Christians many to one.

No, this Sabbath question cannot be decided by majority vote. There is only one way to settle rightly the Sabbath question, and that is for those on both sides of the issue to accept the Bible as the infallible teacher

The Bible Sabbath

and spokesman on the subject, and abide by its decision. Taking this position, we will proceed to the careful study this question merits at our hands.

THE SABBATH MADE FOR MAN

A good place to begin is with the words of Christ as recorded in Mark 2:27: “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”

Here are stated two important facts. The first is that the Sabbath “was made.” It therefore follows that at some particular time, and in some particular way, and by someone, the Sabbath was made. We inquire, then, When was it made, how was it made, by whom, and out of what was it made? This information is not given in the scripture just quoted, so we must look elsewhere in the Bible for an answer to these inquiries.

In Genesis 2:2, 3, we have the definite information we seek: “On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”

The Sabbath, therefore, was made at the close of creation, on the first seventh day of time. On that day God rested from all His work which He had made. He also blessed and sanctified it, that is, made it holy, and set it apart for a holy use. So in this manner the seventh day became God’s blessed, holy rest day, and there is not to be found anywhere in the Bible a statement that God ever said this concerning any other day of the week. God has made but one Sabbath day. This is fact number one.

THE SABBATH OBSERVED BEFORE SINAI

But there are those who contend that the Sabbath was not observed nor obligatory until the giving of the law at the time of the Exodus. But what said the Scripture? In Exodus 16, beginning with the first verse, we read that in the second month after the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, the Lord tested them on the point of Sabbath observance. The fourth verse reads:

“Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no” (verse 4).

“It came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is, that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord.” “Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none” (verses 22, 23, 26).

But it came to pass that some went out on the seventh day to gather, but found none; and then the Lord said unto them: “How long refuse you to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide you every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day” (verses 28-30).

This testing on Sabbath observance occurred nearly a month before the law was given on Sinai, as will be seen from Exodus 19:1, where it states that it was in the third month that the children of Israel came to Sinai, where the Lord proclaimed His law. So before the Sabbath commandment had been proclaimed from Sinai or written on tables of stone, the Lord had said: “See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath” (verse 29).

That verb is in the present perfect tense, which proves the people had had the Sabbath before God tested them on its observance; for how could He test them on something concerning which they were ignorant? This event completely explodes the theory that the Sabbath was not observed prior to the giving of the law.

The Bible Sabbath

The second fact stated by Christ in Mark 2:27 is that the Sabbath “was made for man”; that is, for all men, the word “man” being used in its generic sense; not for the Jew only, as is so often claimed; for the Sabbath was instituted some two thousand five hundred years before anyone was known as a Jew. It therefore cannot be a Jewish institution. When Christ said the Sabbath was made for man, He ought to know because He made the Sabbath, and says that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28). The fourth commandment itself says, “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God” (Exodus 20:10). It is not the Sabbath of the Jew or the Gentile or any other particular people.

Again, in Isaiah 58:13, the Lord calls the Sabbath “my holy day.” The Sabbath, therefore, belongs to the Lord our God, and He made it for all mankind; and in the observance of it all men, from Adam down, would acknowledge Him as the creator of the heavens and the earth. If the Sabbath had always been intelligently observed by all as God intended it should be, there never would have been an idolater, neither could there have been an evolutionist, because the reason for Sabbath observance is the act of creation, for the commandment reads: “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth.”

THE SABBATH VERSUS EVOLUTION

The Sabbath strikes a deathblow to the theory of evolution. A consistent Sabbath keeper could not be a consistent evolutionist.

That the seventh day of the week was observed as the Sabbath by all who worshiped the true God during the Old Testament period is not a disputed question. By patriarchs and prophets and holy men of old the Sabbath was regarded as a most sacred institution, and under the theocracy of Israel its violation was punishable even by death. The importance and sacredness with which the Lord regarded the observance of the Sabbath is forcibly indicated by the following words spoken to His ancient people:

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths you shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed” (Exodus 31:13-17).

A SIGN OF THE CREATOR

It is expressly declared that the Sabbath was to be a sign between God and His people, that they might know that He was the only true and living God; and by it, perhaps more than by any other institution, was the knowledge of the true God to be made known to all the peoples of the world. The fact of creation is used by the Lord to prove His superiority over all other gods and to establish His eternal Godhead.

“The customs of the people are vain: for one cuts a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. . . . But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall you say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion” (Jeremiah 10:3-12).

The Bible Sabbath

“Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:13-15).

Since God is the creator of all things, the psalmist says: “He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered” (Psalms 111:4). And in order that all men might remember Him as the Creator, He gave them the Sabbath as a memorial of creation and His creative power.

CHRIST AND THE SABBATH

When we come to the New Testament, however, many Christian people have an idea that the ancient Sabbath ceases, and that it is superseded by another day. This supposition lacks New Testament proof, as a careful study will clearly reveal.

We inquire, What day did Christ and the apostles observe as the Sabbath? Their custom and teaching on this question should put an end to all controversy, and should be followed by all Christians today. The Sabbath is mentioned at least sixty-four times in the New Testament, and in every instance it refers to the seventh day, with no intimation whatever that it had ceased to be of binding obligation. Christ, during His earthly life, sacredly observed the seventh day, and taught His followers to do the same.

“He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” “He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days” (Luke 4:16, 30, 31).

As this was His “custom,” it follows that the Sabbath day found Him habitually in the synagogue, engaged in divine worship. He ever upheld the Sabbath and the Sabbath law. Concerning the law of God, of which the Sabbath commandment is a part, He said: “Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18).

And to those who would tamper with any part of this law, He gives the following warning: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (verse 19).

There are many who contend that Christ kept the Sabbath because He lived under the old law, and that He observed all the ceremonial ordinances until, by His death, He nailed them to the cross. Such persons, of course, include the Sabbath among the ceremonial ordinances. And then they ask with an air of triumph, “Where are Christians commanded in the New Testament to keep the seventh-day Sabbath after the cross?” There is a statement which is equivalent to a command given by Christ Himself, and to Christians too. It is this: “Pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day” (Matthew 24:20).

In these words Christ identifies the day that would still be the Sabbath forty years after His resurrection. His statement, therefore, virtually constitutes a command. By reading all that has gone before in this twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, it will be seen that He was foretelling the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, when that city should fall into the hands of the Romans; which it did, according to history, in AD 70—forty years after the time He made this prediction. Christ, being able to foretell this destruction, and that there would not be left standing one stone upon another in that magnificent building (Matthew 24:2), was equally able to know the exact time it would occur. He knew it would be forty years from the time He was speaking; and knowing this, He instructed His followers (Christians) as if there were no more question about which day would be the Sabbath than which season would be winter.

The Bible Sabbath

What stronger evidence could be asked for by anyone desirous of doing the Lord's will than these words of Christ regarding the continuance of the Sabbath in the Christian Era? We thus have both the example and the precept of Christ in this matter.

Christ kept the Sabbath perfectly, because it was part of God's required law, the transgression of which is sin. He did this that He might have the righteousness of perfect Sabbath keeping to substitute for man's Sabbath breaking.

Christ never kept Sunday, the first day of the week, as the Sabbath, nor did He command anyone else to do so; and it follows that it is no sin to labor on the first day of the week. If it were, Christ, having never kept it, does not have the righteousness of Sunday keeping to substitute for Sunday breaking. All this proves that the Lord knew that the keeping of the first day of the week would never be a requirement of God upon His children, or He Himself would have set the example and clearly instructed His followers concerning the same; but we have no record in the Gospels anywhere that He ever made mention of the first day of the week.

Since Christ is our example in all things pertaining to righteousness and the Christian life, there is no principle of righteousness required of Christians today that He Himself did not perform. Is it reasonable to believe that if the Lord contemplated a change in the day that should be observed by Christians, He would have maintained absolute silence on so important a matter? And yet He closed His earthly ministry, finished the work of redemption, and ascended to heaven, without giving one scintilla of instruction regarding any other day to be observed than that commanded in the law given on Sinai, which is the seventh day.

THE APOSTLES KEPT THE SABBATH

Let us now consider the apostles, and find out what was their custom and teaching concerning the Sabbath. Of all the apostles, perhaps none occupied so prominent a place in labors and in the number of epistles written as the apostle Paul, and concerning his custom we read: "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures" (Acts 17:1, 2).

Of Paul in Corinth, where he labored a year and six months, teaching the word of God among the people, it is said: "He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks" (Acts 18:4).

Also at Antioch and Philippi he observed the Sabbath, and taught in the synagogues on that day (Acts 13:14; 16:12, 13). Being a tentmaker, Paul labored at his trade during the working days of the week, and these included Sunday, the first day; but the Sabbath day he strictly observed, and was always found at some place of worship, preaching and teaching the Word of God. In practically all the cities where the apostle preached, he raised up Christian churches from among Jews and Gentiles. Most of his epistles were addressed to these churches he had raised up and organized, but in not a single instance does he ever make reference to the first day of the week as being a day that should be observed by Christians as a holy day.

GENTILE SABBATH KEEPERS

It is argued by those who claim that since the resurrection the first day of the week is the day to be observed by Christians, that Paul went to the synagogues on the Sabbath simply because he could there have an opportunity to preach the gospel to the Jews, but that the Gentile Christians observed the first day of the week as the Sabbath. This claim is disproved by the fact that when Paul was at Antioch, he preached the gospel in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

"When the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (Acts 13:42).

The Bible Sabbath

Many of these Gentiles were evidently Christians, for Paul, speaking to them, “persuaded them to continue in the grace of God” (verse 43). If the foregoing contention in behalf of the first day of the week were true, then these Gentiles would have requested Paul to preach to them the next day, which would be the first day of the week. And if Paul was an observer of the first day of the week, he would have said to these Gentiles, “Now we as Christians, since the resurrection of Christ, observe the first day of the week. Why wait until the next Sabbath? I will come and preach to you Gentiles tomorrow.”

But no such word was spoken by either Paul or the Gentiles, but they waited until the next Sabbath, and the 44th verse says: “And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.” Let us notice further what Paul himself says concerning the things he taught to both Jews and Gentiles.

When he made his defense before Felix, he said: “This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14).

Before Festus he testified that he had offended in nothing “against the law of the Jews” (Acts 25:8). Before Agrippa he testified that in preaching to both small and great he had taught “none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22).

The observance of the Sabbath was one of the things that the Jews of Paul’s day most tenaciously contended for; and if the apostle had taught that the Sabbath was no longer binding and that the first day of the week should be observed in its place, the Jews surely would have brought this as a strong accusation against him. The fact that they did not proves that Paul never taught even the Gentile Christians to observe any other day than the original Sabbath.

WEEKLY AND CEREMONIAL SABBATHS

But someone says: “Did not Paul positively declare in Colossians 2:14-16 that Christ blotted out the ‘handwriting of ordinances,’ taking it out of the way, nailing it to the cross, and that no man thereafter was to judge them in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days?”

Paul did make such a statement in Colossians, but in speaking of the Sabbath days (plural), he made no reference to the weekly Sabbath, but to those days which were set apart for the performance of certain ceremonies under the Levitical law, and which were called Sabbath days simply because the people were commanded to do no work on those particular days. These ceremonial Sabbaths, which Paul says were nailed to the cross, are spoken of in Leviticus 23. The 24th verse says:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall you have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.”

Also in the 27th and the 32d verses, other days are spoken of as ceremonial Sabbaths. Then to show the distinction between these and the regular weekly Sabbath, the Lord plainly states in the 38th verse that these were all “besides the Sabbaths of the Lord.”

There is further proof that the apostle Paul referred to these ceremonial Sabbaths, and not the regular weekly Sabbath, in Colossians 2:17, when he says that these “are a shadow of things to come.”

Types and shadows came into existence as a result of sin, but the Sabbath was instituted at creation before sin entered; therefore it cannot be included among the types and shadows referred to by Paul. These ceremonial Sabbaths, which were shadows of things to come, pointed forward to Christ; but the seventh-day Sabbath points backward to creation. The Sabbath primarily is not a type or shadow of something to come; it is a memorial of an event that is past. So Paul is perfectly consistent in what he says in Colossians concerning the Sabbath days which were a part of the handwriting of ordinances and which were nailed to the cross, and also in his example and teaching concerning the Sabbath commandment.

The Bible Sabbath

I have referred to Paul and his writings in particular because he was an apostle especially to the Gentiles. And if the contention that the Gentile Christians of apostolic times observed a different day than that enjoined in the fourth commandment had any foundation whatever, Paul would have been most likely to say something about it. But not only is Paul silent on this point, but the entire New Testament contains no command or instruction, either from Christ or from any of His apostles, for the transfer of the day of worship from the seventh to the first day of the week.

SUNDAY HAS NO CLAIM TO HOLINESS

To prove further the truthfulness of this statement, since the majority of professed Christians today observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath, we will notice every text in the New Testament where the first day of the week is mentioned. By so doing there will be no possible chance for any scriptural evidence for Sunday sacredness to escape us. This will not be a long and difficult task, because the first day of the week is mentioned only eight times in the entire New Testament. The complete list follows:

1. Matthew 28:1: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher."
2. Mark 16:2: "And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun."
3. Mark 16:9: "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."
4. Luke 24:1: "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them."
5. John 20:1: "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and sees the stone taken away from the sepulcher."
6. John 20:19: "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you."
7. Acts 20:7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."
8. 1 Corinthians 16:2: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

The first five of these texts, as will be seen, merely state the fact that it was on the first day of the week that Christ rose from the dead. Surely there is no evidence here for Sunday observance. The sixth text, John 20:19, cannot possibly be construed to refer to a religious meeting. The text says "the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews," and not to observe the day in honor of Christ's resurrection. The false rumor had been started by their enemies, that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus while the guards at the tomb had slept. It was true that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, and the Roman seal with which it had been sealed had been broken. The penalty for breaking this seal might be death, and this was charged against the disciples; so for "fear" they had gone to their own place of abode, and had locked the doors. Furthermore, the disciples did not believe at this time that Jesus had risen from the dead.

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat

The Bible Sabbath

at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen" (Mark 16:9-14).

This all occurred on the very day on which Christ rose from the dead. How, then, could they be celebrating this day in honor of His resurrection, when they did not believe that He had been raised from the dead? There is positively no evidence here for Sunday sacredness.

PAUL'S USE OF SUNDAY

The seventh text mentioning the first day of the week is found in Acts 20:7. We now have before us the only record within the entire New Testament of a religious meeting held on the first day of the week. Upon examination of the text itself and the context, it will be seen that this meeting was not held upon the first day of the week because any sacredness was attached to it by those who held it, but because of the circumstances connected with the occasion. At this meeting, which was held at Troas, Paul preached to the people, "and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber" (Acts 20:7, 8).

By this it will be seen that this was a night meeting. It was, therefore, held during the night, or dark part, of the first day of the week, which corresponds to our Saturday night, as the dark part of each day comes first, according to the Bible reckoning of the days of the week, one day ending at sunset and the next day beginning at that point.

"The evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5).

"From even unto even, shall you celebrate your Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:32).

The Jews, as well as Christ and the apostles, reckoned sunset as the ending of one day and the beginning of another. "At even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased" (Mark 1:32).

They waited until the Sabbath was past at sundown before bringing their sick to be healed; therefore, the Sabbath ends at sundown Saturday evening, and the first day begins. This meeting at Troas, then, was held on our Saturday night, and lasted until Sunday morning. The occasion of this particular meeting was this:

The apostle Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, after having visited many of the churches which he had raised up throughout Macedonia and Asia. The Spirit of the Lord had made it plain to Paul that at Jerusalem bonds and afflictions awaited him, and he knew that it would not be his privilege to meet with these believers again, that he would never again see their faces.

(Read Acts 20:23, 37, 18.) Naturally, he had many things to say to them, and as a final and fitting farewell he desired to break bread with them; after which they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him and said good-by, sorrowing most of all for the words he had spoken to them, that they would see his face no more (Acts 21:13, 14).

That the apostle and these early Christians did not regard this first day of the week as holy, is clearly seen from two facts:

First, while Paul was preaching and breaking bread with the disciples at Troas, the other disciples were sailing the ship, which was doubtless a laborious task, around the promontory from Troas to Assos, a distance of about thirty-four miles. This is something they certainly would not have done if they had regarded the day as the Christian Sabbath. (Read Acts 20:13, 14.)

Second, at break of day, which would be the beginning of the light part of the first day of the week, or Sunday morning, Paul himself started on foot on a journey of nineteen miles by land to Assos; which proves that he did not regard the day with the least degree of sacredness, as such a journey would not comport with his idea and custom of Sabbath keeping. Therefore, there is no evidence in this text for Sunday observance.

The Bible Sabbath

AN INDIVIDUAL, NOT A CONGREGATIONAL SERVICE

Our next and last text mentioning the first day of the week is in 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2:

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do you. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

It is held by Sunday observers that the churches were accustomed to meet for divine worship on the first day of the week, and that Paul instructed them to take up a public collection at these meetings for the poor saints at Jerusalem; but they assume that which the text does not teach. This scripture gives no such instruction. A regular weekly meeting is not even hinted at, and instead of a public collection, each one was to “lay by him in store”; and many translations of the passage render it “by himself at home.” Where was it to be laid by?—“By him in store,” not placed in the collection basket. There is no proof here whatever that the day was or should be observed as the Sabbath. With this text dies the last hope for evidence of Sunday sacredness in the New Testament.

THE SEVENTH DAY IS THE LORD’S DAY

There is one other text, however, which first day observers use in support of their claim, although it does not mention the first day of the week, and we will notice it for a moment. It is found in Revelation 1:10, where John the revelator says: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.”

It is claimed that Sunday should more properly be called the Lord’s day instead of the Sabbath, and that it was to the first day of the week that John referred in his expression, “Lord’s day.” But is this so? Did he refer to the first day of the week? This text certainly does not say so. You will have to go to some other scripture than Revelation 1:10 to find out which day is the Lord’s day; and the Bible unmistakably points out the day, and the only day, to which such a term as “Lord’s day” could apply. In Mark 2:28 Christ says: “The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”

Now if Christ is Lord of the Sabbath day, then candidly, what day is the “Lord’s day”? There can lie but one answer—The Sabbath. Again the Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, speaks these words:

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable,” etc. (Isaiah 58:13).

What day does the Lord here call His holy day? The Sabbath. Then if the Lord calls the Sabbath His holy day, what day is the Lord’s day? Again the answer is, The Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. And Revelation 1:10 only proves that the beloved disciple John, banished to the lonely isle of Patmos, almost seventy-five years after the cross, was still a faithful observer of God’s holy Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

WHO CHANGED THE SABBATH?

Our study thus far has disclosed the fact that from Genesis to Revelation there is but one Sabbath day brought to view, and that is the seventh day of the week. In not a single place within the covers of the Bible is there one command for the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week. The word “Sunday” is not found in the Bible. Neither is there a particle of evidence to be found, from the first verse of the first chapter of Matthew to the last verse of the last chapter of Revelation, that the first day of the week was regarded as sacred or observed as the Christian Sabbath by the apostles or the early Christians during the time covered by the New Testament record. Someone will ask: “How then has this change come about? If neither Christ nor His apostles transferred the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, who is responsible?”

The Bible Sabbath

This is a very natural question, and the Bible furnishes the answer. This phase of the Sabbath question (the attempted change) is a subject of prophecy. More than five hundred years before the Christian Era, through the prophet Daniel, the Lord foretold a power that should arise that would “think to change” the “times and laws” of God.

It will not be difficult to make the application of the prophecy, for the power thus charged by the high tribunal of God’s unalterable Word pleads guilty to the indictment. This prophecy is found in the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel. As recorded in this chapter, Daniel had a vision, in which he saw four great beasts come up from the sea, diverse one from the other.

The fourth was a nondescript beast, a monster unlike anything in the animal kingdom, and upon its head were ten horns. Afterward another horn came up, and in order to establish itself, uprooted three of the first horns. When Daniel sought for a meaning of this vision, an angel appeared and made known to him the interpretation. Said the angel:

“These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth” (Daniel 7:17).

These beasts of Daniel’s vision were symbols of earthly governments. The interpretation continues: “Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces” (verse 23).

Every student of history knows that Rome was the fourth great universal empire. “And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise” (verse 24).

History also tells us that when the great Roman Empire fell, ten divisions, or kingdoms, sprang up in its territory. The three horns plucked up by the little horn that arose afterward were the Vandals, the Heruli, and the Ostrogoths.

THE CHANGE A SUBJECT OF PROPHECY

Concerning this little horn, the angel giving the interpretation said: “He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time” (verse 25).

We have now to inquire, What power arose on the territory of the Roman Empire, that subdued three other powers in order to establish itself; that has spoken great words against the Most High; and that has worn out the saints of the Most High? History, which shows the fulfillment of prophecy, answers that there has been but one power that has fulfilled the work this little horn was to do, and that power is the papacy, or the Roman Catholic Church. It was this power before whom the three Arian kingdoms—the Vandals, the Heruli, and the Ostrogoths—fell, for the reason that these powers believed and held to the doctrines of one certain teacher named Arius, and they stood in the way of the exaltation of the Bishop of Rome to the place of Pontifex Maximus, and denied the arrogant claims made for him. Therefore, before the papacy could be fully and securely established, these opponents had to be removed, and this was accomplished.

Has that power spoken great words against the Most High? It most assuredly has, in the blasphemous titles that have been given to the pope. He has been proclaimed “infallible,” and has been termed the “vicar of Christ,” “another God on earth,” the “ruler of the universe.” It is claimed that he has power “to forgive sins” and to “dispense with the very laws of Christ.”

What more swelling words than these could be spoken against the Most High by mortal man? Did the papacy “wear out the saints of the most High”? Let history answer. Call the roll of the long Dark Ages when the fires of the Inquisition, the rack, and the gibbet sent to their death the noblest and purest of God’s saints, and spread desolation over the fairest portions of earth. The blood of between fifty and one hundred millions of martyrs cries out the answer to the prophecy in the affirmative.

The Bible Sabbath

A FRANK CONFESSION OF GUILT

Has the Roman Catholic Church tampered with the times and laws of God? We will let her answer for herself. The law of God is summarily contained in the Ten Commandments. The Roman Church has laid impious hands upon the fourth commandment, and substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of the Sabbath, the seventh day, which the fourth commandment strictly enjoins. In this matter the Catholic Church claims sole responsibility for the change, and points to it as the mark of her ecclesiastical authority. Read the following questions and answers quoted from The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, by Rev. Peter Geiermann, C. S. S. R., published by B. Herder, of Saint Louis, Missouri, 1910, pages 49, 50.

“Question. What is the third commandment?

“Answer. The third commandment is: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

“Question. Which is the Sabbath day?

“Answer. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

“Question. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

“Answer. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 336), transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.

“Question. Why did the Catholic Church substitute Sunday for Saturday?

“Answer. The church substituted Sunday for Saturday, because Christ rose from the dead on a Sunday and the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles on a Sunday.

“Question. By what authority did the church substitute Sunday for Saturday?.

“Answer. The church substituted Sunday for Saturday by the plenitude of that divine power which Jesus Christ bestowed upon her.”

NO SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY FOR THE CHANGE

Again we quote from A Doctrinal Catechism, page 174, written by the Rev. Stephen Keenan, published by P. J. Kennedy and Sons, New York City:

“Question. Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept?

“Answer. Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.”

The following is from An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine, page 58:

“Question. How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holydays?

“Answer. By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church.

“Question. How prove you that?

“Answer. Because by keeping Sunday, they acknowledge the Church's power to ordain feasts, and to command them under sin.”

CARDINAL GIBBONS ON THE CHANGE

Cardinal Gibbons, who for many years was the only cardinal and highest authority for the Catholic Church in America, in his book, Faith of Our Fathers, edition of 1917, pages 72, 73, says:

“You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.”

We will give just a few more quotations from Catholic authority on this point, although many more could be given. This time we quote from the Catholic Mirror, Cardinal Gibbons' official magazine, published in the city of Baltimore, in its issue of September 23, 1893:

The Bible Sabbath

“The Catholic Church, for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday. . . The Christian Sabbath is therefore to this day, the acknowledged offspring the Catholic Church as spouse of the Holy Ghost, without a word of remonstrance from the Protestant world.”

Also from the issue of September 9, 1893, we read the following:

“Thus, it is impossible to find in the New Testament the slightest interference by the Savior or His apostles with the original Sabbath, but on the contrary, an entire acquiescence in the original arrangement; nay, a plenary endorsement by Him, whilst living; and an unvaried, active participation in the keeping of that day and no other by the apostles, for thirty years after His death, as the Acts of the Apostles has abundantly testified to us.

“Hence the conclusion is inevitable; viz., that of those who follow the Bible as their guide, the Israelites and Seventh-day Adventists have the exclusive weight of evidence on their side, whilst the Biblical Protestant has not a word in self-defense for his substitution of Sunday for Saturday.”

Again, from the issue of September 23, 1893:

“The most glaring contradiction, involving a deliberate sacrilegious rejection of a most positive precept, is presented to us today in the action of the Biblical Christian world. The Bible and the Sabbath constitute the watchword of Protestantism; but we have demonstrated that it is the Bible against their Sabbath. We have shown that no greater contradiction ever existed than their theory and practice. We have proved that neither their Biblical ancestors nor themselves have ever kept one Sabbath day in their lives. The Israelites and Seventh-day Adventists are witnesses of their weekly desecration of the day named by God so repeatedly, and whilst they have ignored and condemned their teacher, the Bible, they have adopted a day kept by the Catholic Church.

“What Protestant can, after perusing these articles, with a clear conscience continue to disobey the command of God, enjoining Saturday to be kept, which command his teacher, the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, records as the will of God? The history of the world cannot present a more stupid, self-stultifying specimen of dereliction of principle than this. The teacher demands emphatically in every page that the law of the Sabbath be observed every week by all recognizing it as ‘the only infallible teacher,’ whilst the disciples of that teacher have not once, for over three hundred years, observed the divine precept!

That immense concourse of Biblical Christians, the Methodists, have declared that the Sabbath has never been abrogated, whilst the followers of the Church of England, together with her daughter, the Episcopal Church of the United States, are committed by the 20th Article of Religion, already quoted, to the ordinance that the Church cannot lawfully ordain anything ‘contrary to God’s written word.’ God’s written word enjoins His worship to be observed on Saturday absolutely, repeatedly, and most emphatically, with a most positive threat of death to him who disobeys. All the Biblical sects occupy the same self-stultifying position which no explanation can modify, much less justify.”

STAND FOR GOD AND TRUTH

The foregoing quotations constitute a most glaring confession on the part of the Catholic Church to the charge brought against her by the Word of God. And what a challenge this is to the Protestant who wants to be consistent with the name he bears! Thank God, there are still today faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will not bow, in things religious, to the commands of any but their sovereign Lord. The Sabbath question constitutes one of the most serious issues before the Christian world today. This tract may per chance fall into the hands of someone who up to this time has been in ignorance of the true Sabbath of God, and who, like the writer, for many years thought he was fulfilling the Word of God in keeping Sunday, the first day of the week. Let me appeal earnestly to all such, now that the light of this question has come, Will you not step over onto the side of God’s truth?

Unpopular though it may be now, it is sure to triumph at last.