

Sabbath or Sunday?

What Does the Bible Say?

1) What is the Sabbath day?

- a. Key text: Genesis 1:31 - 2:3 (first mention)
- b. A day sanctified and holy (Gen. 2:3; Exodus 20:8-11)
 - It is the Lord's Sabbath (Exodus 20:10a)
 - Jesus is called the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8; Luke 6:5)
 - A day to recognize and honor the Creator and His deliverance (Exodus 20:10a; Deuteronomy 5:15)
- c. A day for rest and refreshment (and sometimes worship, Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11; 16:29-30)
 - Actually, Sabbath means *rest*.
- d. A perpetual covenant sign between God and the Jews (Exodus 31:13-17; Ezekiel 20:12)
- e. Its observance is included in the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:8)

2) Prohibitions for the Sabbath

- a. No work (Exodus 20:10; Jeremiah 17:21,22)
 - No kind of labor permitted on one's property (neither family, servants & employees)
- b. No kindling of fires (for meals or warmth) (EX 35:3)
- c. No travel (Exodus 16:29; Isaiah 58:13)
- d. No business deals (Amos 8:5)
- e. Death penalty for violating (Exodus 31:14-15; 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36)

If people truly observe the Sabbath today, why don't they follow all the Scriptural Prohibitions? If one is going to "keep the commandment" they don't get to pick and choose which prohibitions they will follow.

3) The Sabbath was under the Old Covenant (Testament) and believers are now under the New Covenant

- a. Because of this we are not obligated to keep the laws like those who were under the first Covenant. We are under obligation to follow the new Covenant. (Hebrews 8:13; 7:12, 18-19)
 - Christians are not under the bondage of the Law. (Romans 6:14; Galatians 4:1-26)
 - The requirement to observe the Jewish Sabbath was abolished at the cross. (Romans 6:4-17; Galatians 4:9-10)

- b. Christ, in His perfect life, in His perfect sacrifice, is the provision and fulfillment of the law under the New Covenant. And since the believer has received Christ, we have all that He is and all He has done on our behalf. (Matt. 5:17; Colossians 3:13-14).

- d. In the books of Acts -through Hebrews (in the NT, the sabbath is not mentioned after the book of Hebrews), the Sabbath is mentioned in connection with evangelistic efforts and usually in connection with a Jewish synagogue. (I Cor. 9:20)
 - In Acts 18:6, Paul said he was turning his evangelistic efforts to the Gentiles, and after this the Sabbath is only mentioned once. And in that one mention, Paul states that no one should judge another in regards to their Sabbath habits (Colossians 2:16-17)

- e. When the Apostolic leaders met in council to determine what Gentile converts should be expected to observe after salvation, the Sabbath was never mentioned (Acts 15:1-29)

4) There is a different pattern for worship by the Church in the New Testament

- a. There is no commandment in the New Testament where the believers are commanded to worship on the Sabbath (or Sunday), though all the other 9 of the 10 commandments are repeated in the NT.

- b. Why is Sunday the day of choice for most Christians?
 - Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday
 - After His resurrection He met on several occasions with His disciples on Sunday (John 20:1, 19, 26-31)
 - The Day of Pentecost (grand opening of the Church age) occurred on Sunday
 - It was was the day notated in Scripture that the NT believers met on Sundays (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2)

5) Was it Roman Emperor Constantine that started Sunday worship for Christianity?

- a. As stated earlier, Christians as early as AD 33 (right after the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost) began to regularly meet on Sundays for worship
- b. There is much historical evidence (outside of Scripture) that validates the Christian church was meeting for worship on Sundays over 175 years before Constantine made his decree in AD 321.
 - Ignatius of Antioch, one of the Bishops of the first century church and a disciple of John the Apostle (died in AD 108). He wrote in a letter to the Magnesians that the first century Christians:
“If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord’s day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny -- a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher--“
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-magnesians-lightfoot.html>
 - Justin Martyr (110-165 AD), early Christian apologist in Ephesus wrote:
“...we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen...”
(CHAPTER LXVII -- weekly worship of the Christians)
<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html>