

THE LAST DAY OF PROPHECY

DISCOVER THE REST OF THE STORY

FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY

If the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, why do most Christians worship on Sunday? Was the Sabbath changed? Well, yes and no. Let's deal with the "no" first.

God, "with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (**JAMES 1:17**), does not change (**MALACHI 3:6**). The Israelites received two laws from Moses: **1**) the temporary law of Moses, which contained ordinances and ceremonies; and **2**) the law of God, embodied in the Ten Commandments, which is an expression of God's character. We can know that if God does not change, neither will His Ten Commandment law. "My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips" (**PSALM 89:34**).

WHAT ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT?

In the New Testament, the seventh day of the week is called the Sabbath; it is mentioned 58 times. In contrast, the first day of the week is mentioned only eight times. It is simply called the first day of the week, and it is always differentiated from the Sabbath. This is strong evidence for the continued validity of the seventh-day Sabbath.

The Gospel writers record Jesus and the apostles going to the synagogue on Sabbath as their "custom" (**LUKE 4:16**). Jesus said, "I have kept My Father's commandments" (**JOHN 15:10**). The women who went to anoint His body after His death "rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (**LUKE 23:56**).

The law of Moses, which foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice, was made irrelevant, but Paul maintains that the moral law of God is to be kept even as we are under grace. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law" (**ROMANS 3:31**).

HOW THE CHANGE HAPPENED

About 100 years before Christianity arose, the Romans adopted from the Egyptian Mithraists the practice of worshiping the sun with a festival on Sunday, the first day of the week.

Later, as Christianity grew, church leaders wished to increase the number of church members. In an effort to make the faith more attractive to non-Christians, pagan customs were incorporated into the church's ceremonies. The custom of Sunday worship was also welcomed by Christians who desired to differentiate themselves from the Jews, who had become unpopular in the Roman Empire. The first day of the week began to be recognized as both a religious and civil holiday. By the end of the second century, Christians considered it sinful to work on Sunday.

The Roman emperor Constantine, a former sun-worshiper, professed conversion to Christianity, though most believe this was a political move and not a genuine heart change. Constantine named himself Bishop of the Catholic Church and enacted the first civil law regarding Sunday observance in AD 321.

THE CATECHISM

Recall the profound ceremony with which God made known His Ten Commandments, including the blessing of the seventh-day Sabbath. Contrast this with the unannounced, unnoticed anticlimax with which the church gradually adopted Sunday at the command of "Christian" emperors and Roman bishops. And these freely admit that they made the change from Sabbath to Sunday without any biblical mandate. From the *Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (1946) on page 50:

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

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

Q. By what authority did the Church substitute Sunday for Saturday?

A. The Church substituted Sunday for Saturday by the plenitude of that divine power which Jesus Christ bestowed upon her!

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OBEY GOD OR MAN?

When God says, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10), it ends any controversy. We cannot and should not try to change God's Word for our convenience. "If serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (JOSHUA 24:15).

STUDY QUESTIONS

Q. Which day of the week did God bless at creation?

A. "And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (GENESIS 2:3).

Q. Did the Lord ever remove the blessing from the seventh day?

A. "You, O LORD, have blessed it, and it will be blessed forever" (1 CHRONICLES 17:27).

Q. What is the Sabbath a memorial of?

A. "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (EXODUS 20:11).

Q. Did Jesus ever indicate the law of God would be changed?

A. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (MATTHEW 5:17, 18).

Q. Does the Bible predict efforts would be made to change God's law?

A. "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law" (DANIEL 7:25).

Q. Did Paul speak of a power within the church who would work against God's law?

A. "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way" (2 THESSALONIANS 2:7).