



Truth For These Times



18. SUNDAY IN THE BIBLE

Saturday, the seventh-day of the week, is the Bible Sabbath, but many Christians observe Sunday as a day of worship. Can such a stand be supported by the Bible? Are there any texts that authorise a change in the day of worship? Does the Bible say we should keep Sunday because Christ rose from the dead on that day? Many have not examined the texts of Scripture that refer to Sunday in the New Testament, so in this study we will examine each reference that mentions the first day of the week - Sunday.

Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as *THE FIRST DAY* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

Here is the first reference to Sunday, or the first day of the week. It is mentioned in historic setting, but no command is given for its observance. The book of Matthew was written a number of years after the resurrection.

Mark 16:1,2 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on *THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK*, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

This is the same story as the proceeding verse. The book of Mark was also written some years after the resurrection.

Mark 16:9 Now when *He* rose early on *THE FIRST DAY* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

The record states Jesus rose from the dead on the first day, but still there is no command for its observance.

Luke 24:1 Now on *THE FIRST DAY* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices that they had prepared.

The repetition continues through the gospels. Again, the book of Luke was written years after the resurrection. If any change had occurred, it would surely have been recorded, for this would have been a major issue in the mind of any Jew, even a Christian Jew: yet years after Christ ascended to heaven, the subject is met with silence. The reason is obvious – no change had occurred.



Jesus appears to Mary on the first day of the week.

John 20:1 Now on *THE FIRST DAY* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Again the story is repeated. The book of John was written many years after the resurrection, yet a changed day of worship is not even mentioned. Notice that Sunday is not called the Lord's day, or even the Sabbath day, or a holy day. Some keep Sunday to honour the resurrection, but a command to do so is found nowhere in the Bible. We are commanded to remember His death and resurrection, but not by the keeping of a day.

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you EAT THIS BREAD and DRINK THIS CUP, you PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH till He comes.

By partaking of the symbols of bread and wine in the communion service, we are remembering Christ's death at Calvary. The bread reminds us of His broken body, and the wine of His shed blood to cover our sins. By this service we remember His death.



The rite of baptism is symbolic of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We commemorate His resurrection by baptism not worship on Sunday.

Romans 6:3,4 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH, that just as CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The rite of Baptism is symbolic of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. When one is baptised under the water, it represents the death of Christ, and coming up out of the water represents the resurrection of Christ. It is paralleled to our Christian experience when we die to sin, and rise to a new life in Christ. Baptism is the Bible command to honour the resurrection, not the observance of Sunday. In fact, in the entire Bible no day is set aside to commemorate the resurrection.

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, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."



The disciples gathered on the first day of the week not for worship but for fear of the Jews.

Some will say that this text shows how the disciples gathered together for a religious meeting on the first day of the week. However, it will be noted that they were gathered for a particular reason – not for worship – but for fear of the Jews. They had seen what had become of Christ, and were afraid of suffering the same fate. The fact is that at this stage, they did not believe Christ had risen from the dead.

Mark 16:14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THOSE WHO HAD SEEN HIM AFTER HE HAD RISEN.

If they did not believe Christ had risen from the dead, they certainly did not gather for the purpose of honouring the resurrection.

Acts 20:7,8 Now on *THE FIRST DAY* of the week, when the disciples came together **TO BREAK BREAD**, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and **CONTINUED HIS MESSAGE UNTIL MIDNIGHT. THERE WERE MANY LAMPS** in the upper room where they were gathered together.

Before Paul left Troas he gave a long sermon. He was leaving the next morning, so made the most of his time there. It was the first day of the week, and in Bible reckoning (sunset to sunset), the first day of the week commenced at sunset on Saturday night. He could have sailed that night, but chose to stay, then walk to Assos the next morning (Sunday) to catch his boat; a distance of nineteen and a half miles. He did not rest on Sunday, but regarded it as a normal day of the week. But notice that they broke bread on the first day. Many conclude that this makes the day holy, but observe the next text.



Paul preaching before leaving for Assos on Sunday.

Acts 2:46 So **CONTINUING DAILY** with one accord in the temple, and **BREAKING BREAD** from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.

Breaking bread was practised every day of the week, so breaking bread on the first day does not make Sunday a holy day.

1 Corinthians 16:1,2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: **ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK LET EACH ONE OF YOU LAY SOMETHING ASIDE, STORING UP** as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

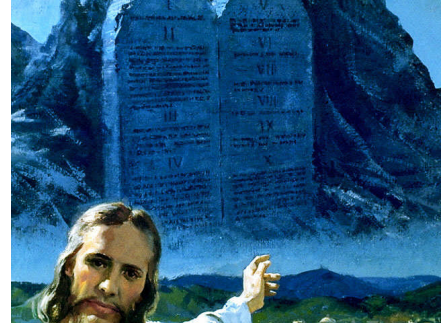
It has been felt by some that because a collection is spoken of here, then it must have been a religious gathering. However, the text makes no suggestion of a meeting. It is simply a command to put aside donations on the Sunday so that all will be ready when Paul comes.

There was a good reason for this collection. The Christians in Jerusalem were suffering persecution and were in great need of life's necessities. Paul wanted the collection to be organised so that no time would be lost on his arrival. Paul then, in fact, was suggesting that the followers of Christ work on Sunday by collecting the necessary items for the Jerusalem Christians.

In the eight passages which mention the first day, there is no command to keep it: there is no record of its being appointed as a Sabbath; no record of any blessing being placed on it; no record of its being made holy: no record of any sacredness being attached to it; no promise of a blessing for its observance: no threat of punishment for its non-observance: it is not once called the Sabbath, or given any sacred title; no record that Christ kept it or commanded it to be kept; no record that the apostles kept it or commanded it to be kept; no record that the early Christian churches observed it; in fact there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in all the Bible that gives the slightest hint of a Sunday institution. The observance of Sunday is a practice for which there is no Bible authority: and it is therefore a practice that should be discarded by all Bible Christians.

Matthew 5:17-19

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. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.



Jesus said don't think I came to destroy the law.

A change in the law of God was never the intention of Christ. He did, however condemn those who taught such, but commended those who upheld the law.

WHAT DAY DID THE APOSTLES KEEP?

Acts 13:14,42,44

But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, AND WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH DAY and sat down. So when THE JEWS went out of the synagogue, THE GENTILES begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. ON THE NEXT SABBATH almost the WHOLE CITY came together to hear the word of God.

The Sabbath day was obviously the day on which the apostles worshipped. Some feel they worshipped on this day to witness to the Jews, but notice how they also preached to the Gentiles. The main day for preaching was evidently the Sabbath, for this was the day the whole city came to hear the Word of God.

Acts 16:12,13

And from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. And ON THE SABBATH day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there*.



Christians met by a riverside on Sabbath when no synagogue was available.

On this day of rest they sought the quietness of nature and went by the riverside. They also had the opportunity of speaking the gospel to the women which gathered there.

Acts 18:3,4 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

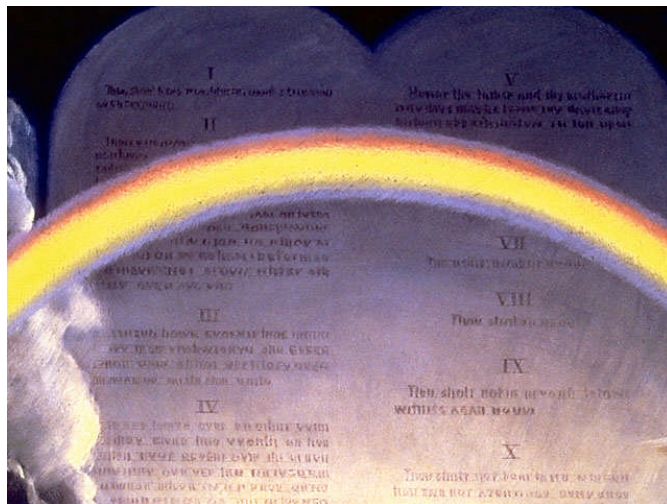
Paul was a tentmaker by trade, and while in Corinth, worked at his trade in association with Aquila and Priscilla. But he did not work on the Sabbath. Instead he went to the synagogue and was successful in persuading the Jews as well as the Greeks about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul and the other apostles kept the Sabbath day, but there is no record of Sunday sacredness. In fact, 84

Sabbath meetings are recorded in the New Testament, but only one Sunday meeting. The Sunday meeting is recorded in Acts 20:7, and as we have mentioned, took place on what we call Saturday night. Paul travelled on Sunday, but did not rest.

John 14:15 **IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.**

One of the commandments says, “Remember the Sabbath day”. It is just as wrong to break this command as any of the others. Sunday keeping has no Bible foundation – it is a human tradition, not a command of God. But the Sabbath command remains unchanged.

What will you do my friend, obey God or man? The choice is yours. If you truly love your Maker, here is the test. If you love Him, you will keep His commands. Won't you stand on the side of right, even if it is not easy? It wasn't easy for Jesus to go to the cross for you, but He did because He loved you. If you Love Him, you will respond by doing His will.



Jesus said, “If you love me keep my Commandments”.

Review Sheet – Sunday in the Bible

Assignment: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. Which is the first text to mention Sunday (i.e. the first day of the week) in the New Testament?
_____ :_____.
2. Did the woman who came to the tomb expect to see Jesus resurrected? Mark 16:1,2
Brought spices, _____.
3. How does the Bible say we should honour the death of Christ? 1 Corinthians 11:26
For as often as you _____, _____.
4. How does the Bible say we honour the death and resurrection of Christ? Romans 6:3
Therefore we were _____ that just as
_____ ... even so we also should _____.
5. Why had the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week? John 20:19
Were assembled _____.
6. On one occasion when the disciples met on the first day, what did they do, and what time of the day did they meet? Acts 20:7,8
The disciples came together to _____ ... and continued his message _____
(Saturday night) Bible reckoning is sunset to sunset.
7. Was the breaking of bread practised only on the first day of the week? Acts 2:46
So _____ ... and _____.
8. Does 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 suggest a religious service?
The collection for the saints ... on the _____.
9. Did Jesus suggest doing away with the Sabbath? Matthew 5:17-19
Till heaven and earth pass away, _____.
10. Which day did the apostles keep as the Sabbath? Acts 13:14,42,44
Went into the synagogue _____ ... on the next _____.
11. How is our genuine love for Jesus demonstrated? John 1:15
If _____.

Do you believe the Bible supports Sunday sacredness? YES NO

Is it your plan to honour God's true Sabbath day? YES NO