

# Who Changed the Sabbath to Sunday?

*There can be no doubt that Christ, His disciples, and the first-century Christians kept Saturday, the seventh-day Sabbath. Yet, today, most of the Christian professing world keeps Sunday, the first day of the week, calling it the Sabbath. Who made this change, and how did it occur?*

No serious student of the Scriptures can deny that God instituted the Sabbath at creation and designated the seventh day to be kept holy. “And 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” (Genesis 2:2–3). It was later codified as the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8–11).

The Word of God makes it expressly clear that Sabbath observance is a special *sign* or “mark” between God and His people. There is also no uncertainty that Christ, His disciples, and the first-century Christians kept the seventh-day Sabbath as commanded—the day we now call “Saturday” (Mark 2:28; Luke 4:16).

## Is There Any Biblical Support for Sunday Observance?

There is absolutely *no* New Testament text stating that God, Jesus, or the apostles changed the Sabbath to Sunday—not a text, not a word, not even a hint or suggestion. *If* there were, those chapters and verses would be loudly heralded by Sabbath opposers. Had Paul or any other apostle taught a change from Sabbath to Sunday, the first day of the week, an absolute firestorm of protest would have arisen from conservative Jewish Christians. The Pharisees and scribes would have insisted that Paul or any other person even suggesting such a thing be stoned to death for the sin of Sabbath-breaking. This would have been a much larger issue than the controversy over circumcision!

The self-righteous Pharisees had already falsely accused Christ of breaking the Sabbath because He violated the added man-made rules and traditions *they* placed upon the Sabbath (Mark 2:24). The total absence of any such controversy over a change in the day of worship is one of the best evidences showing the apostles and other New Testament Christians did *not* change the day. On the contrary, we have a record of many Sabbaths that Paul and his traveling companions kept long after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Read of them in your own Bible in Acts 13:14, 27, 42–44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; and 18:4. Acts 13:42–44 is especially significant in that Paul and Barnabas, when speaking at a Jewish synagogue, were invited to speak again the *next* Sabbath. This would have been Paul’s golden opportunity to tell the people to meet with him the next *day* rather than waiting a whole week for the Sabbath. But, “on the next *Sabbath* almost the whole city [Jews and Gentiles alike] gathered to hear the word of the Lord.”

Yet today, most of the Christian professing world keeps Sunday, the first day of the week, calling *it* the Sabbath. The question arises then, *who* changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and *how* did it occur? The answer may amaze you!

### **Biblical Testimony**

The New Testament plainly shows we are to continue keeping the commandments (Mathew 5:17–18; 19:17; 28:20)—all ten of them. Where, then, do men get the “authority” to *change* the Fourth Commandment by substituting Sunday for the original Sabbath Christ and the apostles kept?

The Bible prophesied many centuries earlier that the time would come when men would think to *change times and laws* (Daniel 7:25). Many Bible prophecies are “dual” in nature—that is, they have a type and antitype, an earlier and a later fulfillment. Though speaking specifically of the soon-coming antichrist, we can see the forerunner type documented in history.

### **The Watering Down of the Sabbath in the First 300 Years**

The Christians during the apostolic era, from about 35 to 100 A.D., kept Sabbath on the designated seventh day of the week. For the first 300 years of Christian history, when the Roman emperors regarded themselves as gods, Christianity became an “illegal religion,” and God’s people were scattered abroad (Acts 8:1). Judaism, however, was regarded at that time as “legal,” as long as they obeyed Roman laws. Thus, during the apostolic era, Christians found it convenient to let the Roman authorities think of them as Jews, which gained them legitimacy with the Roman government. However, when the Jews rebelled against Rome, the Romans put down their rebellion by destroying Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and again in A.D. 135. Obviously, the Roman government’s suppression of the Jews made it increasingly uncomfortable for Christians to be thought of as Jewish. At that time, Sunday was the rest day of the Roman Empire, whose religion was *Mithraism*, a form of sun worship. Since Sabbath observance is visible to others, some Christians in the early second century sought to distance themselves from Judaism by observing a different day, thus “blending in” to the society around them.

During the Empire-wide Christian persecutions under Nero, Maximin, Diocletian, and Galerius, Sabbath-keeping Christians were hunted down, tortured, and, for sport, often used for entertainment in the Coliseum.

### **Constantine Made Sunday a Civil Rest Day**

When Emperor Constantine I—a pagan sun-worshipper—came to power in A.D. 313, he legalized Christianity and made the first Sunday-keeping law. His infamous Sunday enforcement law of March 7, A.D. 321, reads as follows: “On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.” (*Codex Justinianus* 3.12.3, trans. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5th ed. (New York, 1902), 3:380, note 1.)

The Sunday law was officially confirmed by the Roman Papacy. The Council of Laodicea in A.D. 364 decreed, “Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday but shall work on that day; but the Lord’s day they shall especially honour, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ” (Strand, *op. cit.*, citing Charles J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, 2 [Edinburgh, 1876] 316).

Cardinal Gibbons, in *Faith of Our Fathers*, 92nd ed., p. 89, freely admits, “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 [the Catholic Church] never sanctify.”

Again, “The Catholic Church, ... by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday” (*The Catholic Mirror*, official publication of James Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 23, 1893).

“Protestants do not realize that by observing Sunday, they accept the authority of the spokesperson of the Church, the Pope” (*Our Sunday Visitor*, February 5, 1950).

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [Saturday Sabbath to Sunday] was her act... And the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical authority in religious things” (H.F. Thomas, Chancellor of Cardinal Gibbons).

“Sunday is our mark of authority... the church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact” (Catholic Record of London, Ontario Sept 1, 1923).

*What a shocking admission!*

### **A Prophecy Come to Pass!**

At this point we need to note an amazing prophecy. Daniel 7:25 foretold, “And 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.” Quoting Daniel 7:25, Adam Clarke’s *Commentary on the Bible* says:

“*He shall speak great words against the Most High*] Literally, *Sermones quasi Deus loquetur*; “He shall speak as if he were God.” So Jerome quotes from *Symmachus*. To none can this apply so well or so fully as to the popes of Rome. They have assumed *infallibility*, which belongs only to God. They profess to forgive sins, which belongs only to God. They profess to open and shut heaven, which belongs only to God. They profess to be higher than all the kings of the earth, which belongs only to God. And they go *beyond* God in pretending to loose whole nations from their oath of allegiance to their kings, when such kings do not please them! And they go *against* God when they give indulgences for sin. This is the worst of all blasphemies!

*And shall wear out the saints]* By wars, crusades, massacres, inquisitions, and persecutions of all kinds. What in this way have they not done against all those who have protested against their *innovations*, and refused to submit to their *idolatrous worship*? Witness the exterminating crusades published against the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*. Witness *John Huss*, and *Jerome of Prague*. Witness the *Smithfield fires* in England! Witness *God* and man against this bloody, persecuting, ruthless, and impure Church!

*And think to change times and laws]* Appointing fasts and feasts; canonizing persons whom he chooses to call saints; granting pardons and indulgences for sins; instituting new modes of worship utterly unknown to the Christian Church; new articles of faith; new rules of practice; and reversing, with pleasure, the laws both of God and man.—Dodd” (Emphasis his; Clarke’s *Commentary on the Bible*, Volume IV, p. 594).

### **Who Changed the Sabbath to Sunday?**

Your Bible says, “But in vain [uselessness] they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7).

Further, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to *this word* [the Bible], it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

“Prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the Catholic Church alone. The Catholic Church says, by my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week. And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the Holy Catholic Church” (Thomas Enright, CSSR, President, Redemptorist College [Roman Catholic], Kansas City, MO, Feb. 18, 1884).

“The Pope has power to change times, to abrogate laws, and to dispense with all things, even the precepts of Christ. The Pope has authority and has often exercised it, to dispense with the command of Christ” (*Decretal, de Tranlatic Episcop*).

It is a matter of Biblical and secular history that God never changed His holy Sabbath or transferred its solemnity to Sunday. Who *did*?

*Rome, in concert with the Roman Catholic Church, changed Sabbath to Sunday!*

What will *you* believe? Whom will *you* follow? The God of your Bible—or the traditions of men?

The choice, dear reader, is yours.

