

# *The Sabbath Day*

# **THE SABBATH DAY**

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Edited by

The Committee on Special Affairs

Authorized by

The Priesthood of  
The Church of Jesus Christ

Published by

The Church of Jesus Christ

With Headquarters at  
Monongahela, Pennsylvania  
Sixth and Lincoln Streets

1973

Is the Sabbath Day the first day of the week (Sunday), or is it the seventh day of the week (Saturday)? This question became a controversial one, especially since the Seventh Day Adventist Church came into existence. It boldly proclaims that the Christian world is wrong in observing Sunday as the Sabbath instead of Saturday.

The Church of Jesus Christ believes that Sunday, the first day of the week, should be observed as the Lord's Day. This belief is based upon Scripture and Sacred history, which show that to observe Sunday as the first day of the week was approved by the Lord and observed by the holy Apostles.

Although one of the Ten Commandments given to ancient Israel was to keep the Sabbath Day (seventh) holy, it should be noted that Jesus said, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.' (Matt 5:17) Readers should consider this statement well, for it is truly an important one. In no way was the law and the prophets to be destroyed, for God's Word is never to be destroyed but is rather fulfilled. And it was in Christ Jesus. The following are a few examples: The law of sacrifice was fulfilled in His sacrificial death. The Passover became the Lord's Supper. The law, 'Thou shall not kill' was superseded by the more perfect law, 'whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.' 'Thou shall not commit adultery' was extended to 'Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart'.

Study of the 5th Chapter of St. Matthew reveals clearly how completely Christ fulfilled the law. Also, in the Book of Mormon, Christ said: 'In me is a law of Moses fulfilled'. (III Nephi 9:17) The Bible tells us that Jesus preached in the Synagogues on the Sabbath Day. This He did because He came to fulfill the Law. He was obedient, therefore, even in observing the Sabbath Day. However, as His commandments fulfilled and went beyond the rest of the Law, so it is believed that because the day of His resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, it supersedes the old Sabbath Day (seventh day). An attempt will be made to substantiate this belief in subsequent paragraphs.

To complete or fulfill the Law does not destroy it but rather enhances it by the more glorious teachings of our Lord, Jesus. Of the Sabbath Law, He once said that 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.' Note that the authority of Christ extends to the fulfillment of the Law, including the Law of the Sabbath. This does not mean that Christ denies the divine law of the Sabbath, but boldly proclaims that He, as the Word of God made flesh, is the Lord of the Sabbath, even as He was Lord of all the Law and the prophets.

In Jesus Christ, then we see a fulfillment of the Law (including the Sabbath law) and the birth of a new Testament of which He was the Giver, Mediator, Instructor, and Divine Beginning. History gives us conclusive evidence that the Christians of the Apostolic days observed the first day of the week as the day of Worship and partaking of the Lord's Supper in commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ. This day, Sunday, the first day of the week, was referred to by the Apostles and the Christians as 'The Lord's Day'. The term 'The Lord's Day' given to the first day of the week (Sunday) unquestionably was used by the Apostles and the Christians, as attested to by the following Bible verses: Acts 20:7, 'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...' Also, in 1 Cor. 16:2 'Upon the first day of the week...' and in Rev. 1:10, 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day...'

Moshiem, in his Ecclesiastical History, Century 11, Book 1, Chapter 4, writes, 'The Christians assembled themselves for the worship of God in private dwelling houses, in caves and places where the dead were buried. They met on the first day of the week (Sunday) and here and there on the seventh day (Saturday), which was the Jewish Sabbath.'

Observe that the historian emphasizes that the Christians met on the first day of the week for the 'Worship of God'. And this continued from then on. Notice that the seventh day is referred to as the 'Jewish Sabbath' and that the Christians met 'here and there' on the Jewish Sabbath. But, most importantly, they assembled on the FIRST day of the week (Sunday), thus indicating that the first day of the week was superseding the seventh day as the day of worshipping God.

Mosheim, in Book 1, page 178, writes, ‘... the Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper, which they were accustomed to do on Sundays...’ He then describes the manner in which they administered the Lord's Supper. It had now become a custom to worship God and partake of the Lord's Supper on the FIRST day of the week (Sunday). Although some of the modern Theologians claim that the Sunday Worship is wrong, the Word of God and Ecclesiastical History support those who worship God on Sunday. If Sunday worship is in error, the early followers of Christ were also in error. We do not think they were wrong, because they were, without doubt, men endowed with Divine Inspiration. Surely, if they had been an error, God would have corrected them.

Justin Martyr, near the close of his ‘Apology’, which he presented to Antoninus Pius, A.D. 150, gives the following account: ‘On the day, which is called Sunday, all, whether dwelling in the towns or in the villages, hold meetings; and the Memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the apostles are read... ‘We all commonly hold our assemblies on SUNDAY because it is the first day on which God converted the darkness and matter, and framed the world; and Jesus Christ, our Savior, on the same day arose from the dead.’

Again, note that at 150 A.D. the disciples were still meeting on the first day of the week, plainly called by them SUNDAY. The writer, Justin Martyr, compares the Resurrection of Christ, which took place on the first day of the week, to God's conversion of darkness and matter on the first day of Creation.

In the beginning of Creation, on the first day, God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And so it was. His first work was to create ‘Light’, because it is essential to life and progress. Without light, there can neither be life nor progress. Darken the light of the sun, and all life would quickly perish, and deterioration would set in and shortly the Earth would die.

Likewise, if Christ had not Risen, the world would have remained in spiritual darkness. But Christ arose on the first day of the week, and the glorious LIGHT of His love and Life began to illuminate the entire world. Now, at His Resurrection, life and progress really commenced, on the FIRST day, or SUNDAY.

Is it any wonder then that the Apostles and disciples of Jesus worshipped on the first day of the week. They understood the Divine significance of His Resurrection on the 'First Day'. Hence, they called it 'The Lord's Day', in His Honor. The seventh day was superseded by the first day, Sunday. Let us continue with a little more history.

It is written in Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Century 1, Book 1, Chapter 4, Paragraph 4, 'The Christians of this Century assembled for the Worship of God, and for their advancement in piety, on the FIRST day of the week; the day on which Christ re-assumed His life. For this day was set apart, for religious worship by the Apostles themselves, and that after the example of the Church in Jerusalem, it was generally observed, we have unexceptionable testimony'.

Gabriel Albaspinaeus, in his Ecclesiastical History, Book 1, Page 53, writes, 'In vain some learned men labor to persuade us, that in all the early Churches, both, the first and the last days of the week were held sacred. The Churches of Bithynia, mentioned by Pliny, devoted but ONE stated day to their public worship; and beyond all controversy, that was what we call the Lord's Day, or the first day of the week.'

Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, Volume 1, Page 168, writes, 'So then, 'Synods and Assemblies of Bishops came together and unanimously drew up in letters an ecclesiastical decree for the faithful everywhere, to the effect that the mystery of the Lord's resurrection from the dead should never be celebrated on any other day but the Lord's Day (Sunday), and that on that day alone we should observe the close of the Paschal feast.'

We believe we have given the reader sufficient proof, biblically and historically, that the worshipping of God on the FIRST day of the week or SUNDAY does not constitute a breaking of the Sabbath law as given to Moses, but rather a fulfillment of it, and that it was taught by the Apostles and observed by the early Christians. We believe the observance of Sunday Worship was given by Divine Inspiration, or else God would have revealed otherwise.

We write this article with prejudice towards no church or person, but only in the hope that this controversial subject can be cleared up in the minds of any who may be confused over it. For the members of The Church of Jesus Christ, we say in conclusion that when the Gospel was restored, the Lord blessed the Saints as they met on Sunday. If God would have wanted us to worship Him on the seventh day (Saturday), He certainly would have revealed it. As a church, we counsel all our members to keep the Sabbath (Sunday) Holy unto the Lord. As a word of warning, be not attracted to the world, but rather live so the world will be attracted to the Lord by our righteous example.