

Saturday or Sunday Worship?

Study by Andy F. Nazario, PhD

The Sabbath

Sabbath, 7676, shabbath, shab-bawth', intens. From 7673; intermission, i.e. (spec.) the Sabbath: -(+every): -rest, sabbath. (Strongs Concordance)

Sabbath (sab'ath) [rest]. The divinely instituted day of rest, ordained for all men. God having completed the work of creation in 6 days ceased from creative work on the 7th day. "And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work" which he had made in a creative manner (Ge. 2:1-3): (Davis, page 521)

Sabbath on the seventh day.

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
2 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.
3 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.

Exodus 20:1 And God spake all these words, saying,
2 I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:
5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;
6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:

11 For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

Exodus 31:

12 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I *am* the LORD that doth sanctify you.

14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant.

17 It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Deuteronomy 5:

12 Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.

13 Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work:

14 But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

Sabbath is also the feasts

Leviticus 23:

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are* my feasts.

3 Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: it *is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

4 These *are* the feasts of the LORD, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

5 In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover.

6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day *is* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*.

Jesus stated about the Sabbath.

Mark 2:

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

First Day of the Week, Sunday

John 20:1 The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.
2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

Mark 16:

9 Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

10 *And* she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

How did Sunday become a day of worship to God?

“On March 7, 321 A.D., Constantine the Great, known as “The First Christian Emperor,” made it a law in the Roman Empire that everyone was to rest on SUNDAY.” (Rives, page 169)

“History reveals that during the first century the whole known world rested on the Sabbath day.” (Rives, page 172)

Rives goes on to say that Josephus and Phile stated this; “The multitude of mankind itself have had a great inclination of a long time to follow our religious observances: for there is not any city of the Grecians, nor an of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come.” (Rives, page 172)

Rives went on to say that Philo stated the same thing on page 173. He stated that the whole known world rested on the seventh day, Sabbath, Saturday. In scripture that the Greek word *sabaton* was used, it is in reference to the English word, week. Review Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 4:16; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; John 20:19; Acts 20:7. (Rives, pp. 185-186)

Rives stated on page 195;

Some theologians believe that the requirement for rest on the Sabbath day, as specified in the Fourth Commandment, was somehow changed at the time of Christ to require rest on Sunday. Tertullian, a Roman theologian also recognized as a “Church Father,” lived during the end of the second century. The pagans of his day challenged the Christians as to their attention to SUNDAY. They knew that SUNDAY was the day of the sun in honor of Sol the

sun god. In Tertullian's apology, he attempts to defend SUNDAY. (Rives, page 195)

Rives stated; "Tertullian's statement tells us two things. Sunday was known to be associated with sun worship. And just as the first century historians told us, the 7th day, which Tertullian calls the day of Saturn, was still known as a day of rest at the end of the second century, almost 200 years after the time of Christ. (Rives, page 196)

Wikipedia on Tertullian;

Tertullian (/tərˈtʌliən/; **Latin:** *Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus*; c. 155 – c. 220 AD)^[1] was a prolific **early Christian** author from **Carthage** in the **Roman province of Africa**.^{[2][3]} He was the first Christian author to produce an extensive corpus of **Latin** Christian literature. He was an early **Christian apologist** and a polemicist against **heresy**, including contemporary **Christian Gnosticism**.^[4] Tertullian has been called "the father of **Latin Christianity**",^{[5][6]} as well as "**the founder of Western theology**".^[7]

Tertullian originated new theological concepts and advanced the development of early Church doctrine. He is perhaps most famous for being the first writer in Latin known to use the term *trinity* (Latin: *trinitas*).^[8] However, some of his teachings, such as the **subordination** of **the Son** and **Spirit** to **the Father**, were later rejected by the Church.^[9] He later apostasized and joined the **Montanist** sect.^[10]

Catholic Church stated;

"Sunday is expressly distinguished from the Sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observation replaces that of the Sabbath. On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work." (Rives, page 197)

Rives states, "In 363 the Synod of Laodicea made it official. It decreed that 'Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord's Day and if they can resting as Christians But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.'" (Rives, page 197)

Rives stated;

"Today, in an effort to abolish the Fourth commandment some theologians appeal to the "Reformation," the "Continental Reformers" and specifically to the Calvin Institutes." (Rives, page 202)

Camilla Kline of the Christian Educators Academy stated in her work;

For many Christians around the world, Sunday is a day of rest, reflection, and worship. But have you ever wondered why Sunday became the day of worship for Christians? The answer may surprise you.

The history of Sunday worship is a long and complex one, filled with political, religious, and cultural influences. The origins of Sunday worship can be traced back to the early Christian church, where the day was chosen to commemorate the **Resurrection** of Jesus Christ.

However, the adoption of Sunday as the official day of worship was not universal, and there have been many debates and controversies surrounding the issue throughout history. From the influence of **Emperor Constantine** to the conflicts between Eastern and Western Christianity, the history of Sunday worship is a fascinating and often surprising one.

The Origins of Sunday Worship in the Early Christian Church

The origins of Sunday worship can be traced back to the early Christian Church. **During** the first few centuries of Christianity, there was no set day of worship. In fact, early Christians would often gather in secret and hold their worship services in the homes of fellow believers.

It wasn't until the fourth century that Sunday worship began to take on a more formal role in the Christian Church. **According to** historical accounts, the early Christians chose Sunday as the day of worship in honor of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

One of the earliest references to Sunday worship can be found in the writings of **Justin Martyr**, an early Christian apologist who lived in the second century. In his writings, Justin describes how Christians would gather together on Sunday to read the Scriptures, listen to a sermon, and partake in the Lord's Supper.

Over time, Sunday worship became more organized and structured. **By** the fifth century, Sunday had become the official day of worship for the Christian Church. This was largely due to the influence of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who declared Sunday a day of rest and worship throughout the Roman Empire.

Today, Sunday worship is still an important part of the Christian faith. **Many** Christians around the world gather together on Sunday to worship, pray, and fellowship with one another.

The Influence of Jewish Tradition on Sunday Worship

Many early Christians were Jews, and Jewish tradition played a significant role in shaping the early Christian Church. One of the most significant Jewish traditions that influenced Sunday worship was the Sabbath. The Sabbath, or Shabbat in Hebrew, was the seventh day of the week, a day of rest and worship for the Jews.

Early Christians believed that Jesus' resurrection took place on a Sunday, which they called the Lord's Day. They began to associate Sunday with the new creation that came with the resurrection, and it soon became the day for Christian worship.

However, some scholars argue that the influence of Jewish tradition on Sunday worship went beyond the association with the Sabbath. They suggest that Sunday worship also drew from the Jewish tradition of the synagogue, where Jews gathered to study scripture and pray.

In the early Christian Church, Sunday became a day for gathering together for worship, fellowship, and teaching. The New Testament also refers to the practice of Christians gathering together on the first day of the week, which is likely a reference to Sunday worship.

Despite the shift from Saturday to Sunday as the day of worship, the early Christian Church maintained many Jewish traditions, including the practice of praying at set times throughout the day, which eventually evolved into the Christian practice of praying the Divine Office.

The Role of Emperor Constantine in Sunday Worship

Constantine, who became the first Christian emperor of Rome in the 4th century, played a significant role in the history of Sunday worship. Before Constantine, Christians faced persecution and were unable to openly practice their faith. However, Constantine's Edict of Milan in 313 CE granted religious tolerance to all religions, including Christianity. Many believe that Constantine's adoption of Christianity paved the way for the establishment of Sunday as the Christian day of worship. In 321 CE, Constantine declared Sunday as a day of rest and worship in honor of the sun god, Sol Invictus, and later as a way to honor the Christian Sabbath.

By making Sunday a day of rest and worship, Constantine helped to establish Sunday as the most important day of the week for Christians. This shift from Saturday to Sunday worship was gradual, but it eventually became widely accepted by the church.

While Constantine's role in the establishment of Sunday worship is significant, it is important to note that the idea of Sunday as a day of rest and worship was already present in early Christianity. Constantine's influence, however, helped to solidify and spread the practice.

Emperor Constantine's reign marked a significant turning point in the history of Sunday worship. His Edict of Milan, issued in AD 313, granted religious toleration to Christians throughout the Roman Empire, effectively ending the persecution of Christians. This had a profound impact on the development of Christian worship, including Sunday observance.

Recognition of Sunday as a Holy Day

Constantine's Edict of Milan allowed Christians to practice their faith openly, which led to the recognition of Sunday as a holy day. Christians began to gather together on Sundays to celebrate the Resurrection and participate in worship services.

The Establishment of the Christian Sabbath

Under Constantine's rule, Sunday gradually became established as the Christian Sabbath, a day of rest and worship. This was a departure from the Jewish tradition of observing the Sabbath on Saturday.

The Creation of a Standardized Liturgy

With the newfound freedom to worship, Christian leaders began to develop a standardized liturgy for Sunday services. This allowed for greater consistency and continuity across different Christian communities.

The Building of Churches and Cathedrals

With the support of the Emperor, Christians were able to build churches and cathedrals for their growing communities. This provided dedicated spaces for Sunday worship and helped to further establish the importance of Sunday observance.

The Debate Over Sunday Worship in the Middle Ages

Papal Authority: During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church claimed authority over all matters of faith and practice, including the observance of Sunday as a day of worship. The church asserted that Sunday worship was necessary for salvation and threatened excommunication to those who refused to comply.

Reformation: The Protestant Reformation brought a challenge to the Catholic Church's authority over Sunday worship. Many Reformers rejected the idea that the church had the right to mandate religious practices and questioned the validity of Sunday as a day of worship.

Sabbatarian Controversy: In the 16th and 17th centuries, a controversy arose among Protestants regarding the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. Some argued that the biblical Sabbath was on Saturday and that Sunday worship was a deviation from biblical teaching. This controversy led to debates over the appropriate day for worship and rest.

The Conflict between Eastern and Western Christianity over Sunday Worship

Background: During the Middle Ages, a significant disagreement arose between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity over the observance of Sunday worship.

Issue: The Eastern Church (Orthodox) believed that the Sabbath was still Saturday, and that Sunday was a commemoration of the Resurrection. Therefore, they believed that it was acceptable to work on Sunday and observe the Sabbath on Saturday.

The Western Church (Catholic) took a different approach: They believed that Sunday had become the new Sabbath and that it was necessary to observe it as a day of rest and worship. They also saw it as a way to differentiate themselves from the Jewish faith.

Outcome: Eventually, the Western Church's position prevailed, and Sunday became widely recognized as the Sabbath day. However, the Orthodox Church continued to observe Saturday as the Sabbath day, and Sunday as a day of commemoration.

Sunday Worship in the Modern Era

During the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, some Protestant churches rejected the observance of traditional Catholic holy days, including Sunday, as they believed it was not based on biblical teachings. However, Sunday worship remained a significant part of most Christian denominations.

In the 19th century, Sunday worship took on a new meaning with the rise of the Sabbath movement. This movement, which originated in the United States, emphasized the importance of Sunday as a day of rest and worship, and sought to have it recognized as a legal holiday.

Today, Sunday worship remains a vital part of Christianity, with churches around the world holding services and gatherings on this day. In many cultures, Sunday is considered a day of rest, and Christians use this time to reflect, connect with their faith, and spend time with their families.

The advent of technology has also impacted Sunday worship, with many churches now offering virtual services for those unable to attend in person. Livestreamed and recorded sermons, online prayer groups, and interactive worship experiences have become increasingly common in the digital age.

Despite the changes and challenges of the modern era, Sunday worship continues to be a central part of Christian practice and tradition, uniting believers around the world in their shared faith and devotion.

The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Sunday Worship

Industrialization changed the way people worked and, as a result, the way they worshiped. Factory owners often required their workers to work on Sundays, making it difficult for them to attend church.

The rise of the middle class during the Industrial Revolution also impacted Sunday worship. The middle class had more free time and money, allowing them to attend church regularly and to demand more from their churches.

The growth of cities during the Industrial Revolution meant that people were living closer together, and as a result, churches had to adapt to accommodate larger congregations.

The Significance of Sunday Worship Today

Spirituality: Sunday Worship remains an essential spiritual practice for millions of people worldwide. It provides a dedicated time for contemplation, reflection, and connection with the divine.

Community: Sunday Worship is a time for people to come together and form a community around shared values and beliefs. It allows people to build relationships, offer support, and find a sense of belonging.

Tradition: Sunday Worship has a rich history that spans centuries and has been a cornerstone of many cultures and traditions. It is an opportunity to connect with the past and participate in something that has been significant for generations.

The Role of Sunday Worship in Contemporary Christian Life

For many Christians today, attending church on Sunday is a central part of their religious practice. It provides an opportunity for believers to come together in fellowship and worship, and to reflect on their faith.

Community: Sunday worship also helps to build a sense of community within the church. It allows individuals to connect with others who share their beliefs and to form strong relationships that can provide support and encouragement in times of need.

Spiritual Growth: Sunday worship is also important for spiritual growth. Through prayer, singing, and hearing the Word of God preached, Christians can deepen their understanding of their faith and develop a closer relationship with God.

Mission: Sunday worship can also be an opportunity to recommit to the mission of the church. It can serve as a reminder of the importance of sharing the Gospel and of the call to serve others in the name of Christ.

See also [The Origins of Sunday Worship in the Early Church GCI](#).

Paul opposes any attempt to require the observance of festivals. In Paul's view a person may keep the sabbath or not. In general, Paul would assume that a Jewish Christian would keep the sabbath and a Gentile convert would not (cf. [1 Cor. 9:19-23](#)). It would seem unlikely that Paul pioneered in the observance of Sunday, because he is the only New Testament writer who warns his converts against the observance of days ([Col. 2:17](#); [Gal. 4:10](#); [Rom. 14:6](#)).

Had Paul introduced Sunday worship, he may have been accused of this in [Acts 21:21](#), when he was accused of teaching against circumcision and against observing Jewish customs. However, Paul was not specifically accused of teaching against sabbath observance or promoting observance of the first day of the week at the Jerusalem

conference in Acts 15. It can be argued that Paul found the custom already established among Christians when he began his Gentile mission, which would indicate that the custom originated among Jewish Christians.

Retrieved February 1, 2024 from [The Origins of Sunday Worship in the Early Church - GCI Archive](#)

Malachi 3:6 For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

John 7:

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, *I have done one work, and ye all marvel.*

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Matthew 15:

7 *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,*

8 *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.*

9 *But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.*

10 *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:*

You decide your own course on service to God.

Matthew 5:

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

References

Davis, J.D. & Gehman, H.S. (1944), The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, The Westminster Press Philadelphia.

Hebrew – Greek Key Word Study Bible, Key insights into God’s Word, King James Version, 2nd Revised Edition, AMG Publishers ISBN 978-0-89957-745-6

Kline, Camilla, The Surprising History of Sunday Worship: When Did Christians Start Going to Church on Sundays?, Christian Educators Academy, Retrieved February 1, 2024 from [The Surprising History of Sunday Worship: When Did Christians Start Going to Church on Sunday? - Christian Educators Academy](#)

Rives, Richard (2008), Time is the Ally of Deceit. Second printing February 2009. Partakers Publications ISBN: 978-0-9822844-0-7

Strong’s Comprehensive Concordance of the Bible, Word Bible Publishers, Inc, Iowa Falls, Iowa, ISBN 0-529-06334-4

Wikipedia, Tertullian, retrieved February 1, 2024 from [Tertullian - Wikipedia](#)