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 fulfill-
ment. 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 designat-
ed 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 scatter-
ed 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 wor-
ship. 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, tor-
tured, and, for sport, often used for entertainment in
the Colosseum.

Constantine Made Sunday
a Civil Rest Day
When Emperor Constantine—a pagan sun-wor-
shipper—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
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., cit-
ing 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]
ever sanctify.”

Again, “The Catholic Church,...by virtue of her
divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to
Sunday” (The Catholic Mirror, official publication

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

“What a shocking admission!

A Prophecy Come to Pass!
At this point we need to note an amazing prophe-
cy. 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 blas-
phemies!

And shall wear out the saints] By wars, cru-
sades, 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 exter-
minating 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] Apoointing
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 com-
mandments 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 pre-
cepts 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.