

# Does the Bible teach that Sunday should be kept as the Lord's day in honour of the Resurrection?

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Saturday, the seventh-day of the week, is the Bible Sabbath, but many sincere Christians observe Sunday as a day of worship. Can Sunday worship be supported by the Bible? Are there any Bible texts which 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? The Pope John Paul's encyclical "Dies Domini" calls upon all Christians to keep Sunday holy. His claim is that Sunday worship fulfils the Sabbath obligation of the Old Testament. So in this study we will examine each Bible text, which mention the first day of the week, Sunday, to see if Sunday is really the New Testament day of worship for Christians. It will only take eight texts to reply to the Pope's letter calling for a renewal of Sunday worship, because there are only eight texts in the New Testament that mention Sunday, the first day of the week.

## **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER ONE.**

Matthew 28:1            In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward THE FIRST DAY of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

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 six years after the resurrection.

## **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER TWO.**

Mark 16:1,2            And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. <sup>2</sup>And very early in the morning THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

This is the same story as the preceding verse. It simply mentions that these women came to the tomb on the first day of the week to anoint the body of Jesus. The book of Mark was written ten years after the resurrection.

## **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER THREE.**

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.

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

## **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER FOUR.**

Luke 24:1            Now upon THE FIRST DAY of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

The repetition continues through the gospels. The book of Luke was written twenty-eight 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 twenty-eight years after Christ ascended to heaven, the subject is met with silence. Luke makes no comment that Sunday should be kept in honour of the resurrection. The reason is obvious - no change had occurred.

### **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER FIVE.**

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.

Again the story is repeated. The book of John was written sixty-three 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.

### **HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS HONOUR THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD?**

1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as ye EAT THIS BREAD, and DRINK THIS CUP, ye do SHEW THE LORD'S DEATH till he come.

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.

Romans 6:3,4            Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we are BURIED WITH HIM BY BAPTISM INTO DEATH: that like as CHRIST WAS RAISED UP 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.

### **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER SIX.**

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, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

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, at this stage, they did not believe Christ had risen from the dead.

Mark 16:14                      Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because THEY BELIEVED NOT THEM WHICH HAD SEEN HIM AFTER HE WAS RISEN.

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

### **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER SEVEN.**

Acts 20:7,8                      And upon THE FIRST *DAY* of the week, when the disciples came together TO BREAK BREAD, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and CONTINUED HIS SPEECH UNTIL MIDNIGHT. <sup>8</sup>AND THERE WERE MANY LIGHTS in the upper chamber, 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. What took place at Troas was a special farewell meeting for the Apostle Paul. The believers at Troas were never to see him again.

But notice that they broke bread on the first day. Many conclude that this makes the day holy, but observe the next text.

Acts 2:46                      And they, CONTINUING DAILY with one accord in the temple, and BREAKING BREAD from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness 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.

### **SUNDAY TEXT NUMBER EIGHT.**

1 Cor. 16:1,2                      Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. <sup>2</sup>UPON THE FIRST *DAY* OF THE WEEK LET EVERY ONE OF YOU LAY BY HIM IN STORE, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings 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. They were to make an account of how God had prospered them and put something aside, storing it up, until Paul came to collect it. They were to "lay by him in store" meaning they were to store it up at home until Paul came. There is no evidence at all that this was a collection at a Sunday religious meeting.

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 which should be discarded by all Bible Christians. The Pope is in error in claiming that Sunday worship is the fulfilment of the Old Testament Sabbath.

Matthew 5:17-19      Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>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.

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...<sup>42</sup>And when THE JEWS were gone out of the synagogue, THE GENTILES besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath...<sup>44</sup>AND THE NEXT SABBATH DAY came almost the WHOLE CITY 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 else 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 thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. <sup>13</sup>And ON THE SABBATH we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.

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      And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. <sup>4</sup>And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Paul was a tentmaker by trade, and while in Corinth, he worked at his trade in association with Aquilla 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 and was a special farewell meeting for the apostle. Paul walked and sailed on Sunday, but did not rest.

John 14:15            IF YE 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 tradition of the church of Rome, a command of man, not a command of God. But the Sabbath command remains unchanged.

### WHICH DAY IS THE LORD'S DAY?

Revelation 1:10        I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Sixty years after the cross, the Lord still has a day, it belongs to him, it is special to him, it is the Lord's day. Which day is it?

Exodus 20:10          The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God

Isaiah 58:13           If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words...

Mark 2:28             The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.

The Bible knows no other day which the Lord claims as His. The seventh day sabbath is the Lord's day for Christians. The Lord desires that we honour Him on His holy day, the seventh-day Sabbath.

### HISTORIANS SAY

"It must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day."--  
*McClintock and Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, vol. 9, p. 196, art. "The Sabbath."*

### THE CHURCH SAYS

"You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorising the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we [Catholics] never sanctify." --JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS, "The Faith of Our Fathers," page 111.

### JESUS SAYS

Exodus 20:8           REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY.