

WHAT DAY IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH?

Which day — Saturday or Sunday — is the true Christian Sabbath Day? How can we know? Is the Bible the final authority?

Let's go back in time to the creation week. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). Scripture does not reveal the number of years since the creation of the universe and the earth. The events that occurred between verse one and verse two could be millions of years.

Now we come to Genesis 1:2, "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." So here we see a great destruction had come upon the earth resulting in ruin and chaos!

The prophet Isaiah and the prophet Ezekiel show that the earth was at one time under the rule of the cherub Lucifer and that he rebelled against God which resulted in the total destruction of all life on earth (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:15, 17).

God made the seventh day holy

As we go over the creation week (Genesis 1:3-31), we begin to see why God places so much emphasis on keeping the Sabbath.

"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).

This verse is key to many of the questions people ask. When and how did the seventh day become holy, and why was it sanctified — that is, set apart for holy use?

When the Pharisees questioned Jesus Christ about His disciples picking ears of corn on the Sabbath, Jesus answered them knowing

that they had devised all these strict rules, which made the keeping of the Sabbath a burden. He knew the spirit of the law and that getting something to eat on the Sabbath was not an act of disobedience. He said to the Pharisees, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

Now we begin to see why God rested from all His work and blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The Sabbath was made for man. God had created a perfect man and woman and He knew what their needs would be. So in His great love He created a day of rest to follow six working days. God was not tired. He did not need to rest. But by His resting and putting His presence into the seventh day, He sanctified and made it holy, thereby establishing the Sabbath day. That 24-hour period of holy time occurs every week, every seventh day.

The Sabbath is a sign

Shortly after arriving at mount Sinai, God spoke to the people of Israel the Ten Commandments. Let's look closely at the fourth commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 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: 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" (Exodus 20:8-11).

God is stressing to the nation of Israel the importance of keeping the fourth commandment. But why? The answer to that question is found in the following verse:

"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" (Exodus 31:13).

The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. A sign identifies a store, a gas station or a bank. The Sabbath, the seventh day, is the sign that identifies the Creator God, Who in six days created and set in order all that we see: the land, oceans, trees, plants, animals, birds and fish. And then on the seventh day He rested and made that day holy by putting His presence in it. Then He commanded us to also remember to keep the seventh day holy by refraining from doing our own pleasures and occupations. It is a day to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life, to worship the Creator and praise Him and to worship with people of like minds.

“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you... Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD” . . . (Exodus 31:14-15). Here we see that the seventh day is holy to God and to us.

The verse continues: . . . “observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant” (verse 16). In other words, this covenant is unending; it is continuous; it is permanent. “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” (verse 17).

The Sabbath is the sign that identifies the Creator God and His people. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was chosen to be God’s people. They were to be an example to all nations.

Today God has called into His Church those who are humble and willing to believe, obey and keep all of His Ten Commandments.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired by God to record: “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure [sports, entertainment, business] on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, [a joy, a time for rejoicing] the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, not finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shall thou delight thyself in the LORD” (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Saturday or Sunday

Which day of the week did Jesus Christ observe? “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read” (Luke 4:16).

Did the Apostle Paul keep the Sabbath? “They [Paul and his company] came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down... Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience” (Acts 13:14, 16). Yes, Paul preached a sermon to the Jews that were in the synagogue. The Gentiles were very interested. “And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath... And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God” (verse 42, 44).

From Sabbath to Sunday

What day is the true Christian Sabbath?

The following quotations from mainstream, traditional Christianity freely acknowledge that there is no Biblical authority for the observance of Sunday; and that the seventh day Sabbath was changed to the first day of the week.

“But 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 never sanctify” (James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith Of Our Fathers*, 88th ed., pp. 89).

Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday

(Rev. Peter Geiermann, The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, 1957, p. 50.)

"I have repeatedly offered \$1000 to anyone who can 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 holy Catholic Church alone" (Thomas Enright, CSSR, President of Redemptorist College, Kansas City, Missouri, American Sentinel, June 1883).

The prophet Isaiah was inspired by God to write about the time of Jesus Christ's return and His rule over all nations: . . . "I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory... And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 66:18, 23).

Yes, we can find evidence in history and proofs in the Bible that clearly show which day is the true Christian Sabbath. The Sabbath is the sign between God and His people. It identifies the true God, and it identifies His true followers. It is the sign that points back to the Creator God and back to the creation week. It points ahead to the glorious time when all people will delight in keeping the weekly Sabbath, the day He made for mankind (Mark 2:27-28).