

In that the commandment concerning the holiness of the seventh day Sabbath, along with the other nine of the ten commandments, will be the standard by which all will be judged, it is important that we understand the significance of this often neglected and rejected command. It is natural that some may ask whether, since the time of Jesus Christ, the days of the week have been mixed up. Can we really know which day of the week is the Lord's Day, the seventh day Sabbath?

THE CHANGE OF THE CALENDAR

During the eighteenth century, there was an eleven-day period in which nothing happened throughout the British Empire. Nobody was born and nobody died. Nobody could remember doing anything on those eleven days. On the evening of Wednesday, September 2, 1752, people throughout the Empire went to bed knowing that they would not see the next eleven days. It is true, they knew the next day would be Thursday, but it would be Thursday, September 14.

Actually, most of Europe and the colonized parts of the Americas had dropped ten days from their calendars 170 years before. In October in 1582, the fourth day of the month had been followed

by the fifteenth. What had happened? Why were these changes made?

When Julius Caesar initiated the Julian calendar in 45 B.C., Caesar realized that a solar year is not exactly 365 days long. From calculations at the time it was understood that a solar year is 365 1/4 days, and so, Caesar provided for an extra day to be added every four years.

However, to be more exact, a solar year is 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds long and not 365 days and 6 hours. Over many centuries those 11 minutes and 14 seconds made quite a difference. The seasons and religious holidays were coming at the wrong times.

The GREGORIAN CALENDAR

Pope Gregory's advisers informed him that the Julian calendar was ten days behind true time. That was because of those 11 minutes and 14 seconds each year. And so, in October 1582, ten days were dropped from the calendar.

OCTOBER 1582

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Other changes were also made to ensure the same difficulties would not arise in future years. Leap years would still come every four years, except in the years at the beginning of a century such as 1700, 1800 and 1900. However, that rule does not apply with those centuries beginning with years that are divisible by 400, such as the year 1600 and 2000.

Some did not make the change to the Gregorian calendar until this century. Russia made the change in 1918 and Greece in 1923. The change of the calendar did not effect the weekly cycle of seven days. The order of the seven-day weekly cycle, beginning with the day we call Sunday and ending with the day we call Saturday, goes back to creation in an unbroken line.

Another CALENDAR

Another calendar has been proposed by the International Organization for Standardization in Geneva, Switzerland. For business reasons it proposes designating Monday as the first day of the week from now on. This calendar was adopted by Finland in 1973 and quite a few business diaries are following this practice. This recent change will bring confusion over the Biblical order of the days of the week.

THE CHANGE FROM THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH TO SUNDAY

The idea that Sunday is a special day comes as a tradition from an era after Bible times. The history of the change is quite complex. However, Paul had warned that a shift from Bible teachings would take place within the Christian Church. (Acts 20:29-31; 2 Timothy 4:3,4; 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4,7.) Biblical and historical records reveal that:

I There were no early changes to the Sabbath in Jerusalem

At least five facts demonstrate that there were no changes made to the seventh-day Sabbath commandment by the faithful believers of New Testament days:

1. The JERUSALEM COUNCIL: The first church council was held in Jerusalem in A.D. 49-50. Because changes are hard for most people to make, a considerable controversy had developed over whether Christians should abandon certain Jewish festivals. An account of the decisions made at that time can be found in Acts 15. In summing up, James remarked that Gentile Christians were receiving instruction from Moses in every city "in the synagogues on every Sabbath." Acts 15:21. Clearly, the idea of a new holy day for worship was not on the agenda for there was total agreement on the matter. The idea of a new holy day had not come up. The seventh-day Sabbath was the holy day.

2. The BOOK OF ACTS: Although the book of Acts covers the growth of the Christian Church from the time of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and although it outlines the activities of teaching the gospel over a period of approximately 25 years, there is no hint of a change of the holy day of worship. There are, however, many references to the Sabbath and worship on that day. In fact, in the book of Acts we have reference made to 84 Sabbath day meetings. These worship meetings were conducted with not only Jewish people and Jewish Christians, but also with Gentile people and Gentile believers. (See Acts 13:13,14,42-44.) Paul was a seventh-day Sabbath keeper. (Acts 17:2.)

3. The PROPHECY OF JESUS CHRIST: Christ rejected the human traditions

that had been heaped upon the Sabbath. However, He upheld the holiness of the day that He had set aside for the benefit of humanity. (See Matthew 12:1-12; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 4:16.) Jesus Christ also indicated that the holy Sabbath would be significant many years after His resurrection. Looking through to the time when believers in Him would obey His words and flee from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jesus said, "Pray that your flight will not take place in the winter or on the Sabbath." Matthew 24:20. Jesus Christ revealed that the Sabbath would still be holy long past the time of His death, burial, resurrection and ascension to heaven.

4. The REVELATION: The Revelation focuses upon Jesus Christ's life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, heavenly ministry and second coming. Although written at the end of the first century, the first day of the week is not mentioned. Rather, the holy day that is special to our Lord is upheld (Revelation 1:10; Mark 2:27,28) and the ten commandments are revealed to be the standard of Christian living and the judgement. (Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 11:19; 15:5.) The Sabbath of the ten commandments is the holy seventh-day.

5. The WITNESS OF HISTORY: The political situation about A.D. 135, under Emperor Hadrian, made the situation for Christians extremely difficult. The Jews had been a source of irritation to the Romans for a long time. The revolts of the Jews against the Romans under Simon Bar Kochba, and others, increased the tensions. Because Christians kept the seventh-day Sabbath as a holy day, they were closely identified with the Jews and suffered at the hands of the Romans. Hadrian banned circumcision and Sabbath-keeping and, in Rome, fasting was instituted for the Sabbath day as an anti-Jewish measure, for it ran contrary to Jewish practice. Soon negative associations and

persecution for Sabbath-keepers, made the festive Sunday an appealing alternative. Although faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ continued to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy under intense persecution, some Christians began to compromise. By changing to Sunday they were no longer linked

with the Jews and had the added bonus of establishing a point of contact with the sun-worshipping pagans of the Roman Empire. (See Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, Rome 1977.)

2 There were no early changes to the Sabbath in Rome

Many pagans became Christians in the early centuries. It was natural for them to prefer Sunday as a day of worship for that had been the day on which they had attended the temples, and the Roman emperors opposed Sabbath-keeping. The idea of a yearly celebration of the resurrection was gradually replaced by a weekly celebration each Sunday. However, even though there were early moves to recognize Sunday as a special holy day in the city of Rome the change from the seventh to the first day of the week was gradual. For the two greatest steps in changing God's Sabbath, we have to go to the fourth century:

1. The FIRST CIVIL SUNDAY LAW:

On March 7, 321 the Roman Emperor Constantine issued the first law requiring people to rest on Sunday. It was legislated, "On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and the people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed." - Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 5th ed., Vol.3, p. 380. The Emperor also wrote, "Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd: for we have received from our Saviour a different way... All should unite in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, and in avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews." - Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3, 18-19 NPNF.

2. The DECISION OF THE CHURCH:

The Roman government law encouraged Sunday keeping. However, it did not prohibit seventh-day Sabbath keeping. That was left to the Church to do. At the regional Council of Laodicea, the Church decreed, "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day... If however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ." - Charles J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 316. This was supported by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The A.D. 538 Council of Orleans prohibited all country people from working on Sundays and those who refused to desecrate God's Sabbath were persecuted.

3 The Church claims to have made the changes

"The Catholic Church, after changing the day of rest from the Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day - made the Third Commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept as the Lord's day." -Catholic Encyclopaedia, Vol. IV, p. 153.

James Cardinal Gibbons wrote, "Now the Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice. Not to mention other examples, is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and to abstain on that day from unnecessary servile work? Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? But 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 never sanctify." - James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 89.

GOD'S COMMANDMENT OR TRADITION...

The seventh day Sabbath is the only weekly holy day mentioned in the Bible. It is special to Jesus Christ our Creator and Saviour. He made it for us. On the other hand, the first day of the week has no special place in Scripture. It has been enshrouded in the tradition of disregard for God's holy Sabbath. Do we dare use a tradition, however good it may at first appear, to put aside the clear command of God? God has commanded, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." Exodus 20:8-11.■