

## **Little Known Facts Relating to the Sunday vs Sabbath Controversy**

“ Many people believe that the origin of the Christian Sunday is identical with the origin of the Hebrew Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was changed either by Jesus Himself or by His apostles from the seventh to the first day of the week. This belief has persisted even though no passage of Scripture can be found that teaches that the Hebrew Sabbath has been transferred from one day of the week to another.... ‘The change from Sabbath to Sunday was the result of a long historic process which is tied up with the formative years of Christianity... This change was not sudden. It was a slow process of more than three centuries duration...’ There is not the slightest hint that Christ or the apostles changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week... No specific command is given in the bible to observe Sunday as a day of rest and worship.” – Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible; p.961, 972

“There is ...absolutely no indication either that the ‘first day’ replaced the ‘Sabbath day’ in practice (the first Jewish Christians continued to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath), or that there was a transfer of Sabbath theology to Sunday worship... Sunday is not presented in the NT as a sign of anything, despite it’s connection to the resurrection” – ‘New Dictionary of Biblical Theology’, Desmond Alexander et al, eds. InterVarsity, 2000 – A.G. Shead, Moore Theological College – s.v. ‘Sabbath’  
“It would have been socially impossible for the first Christians to have kept Sunday as a day of rest.” – ‘Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology’, David T. Atkinson, et al, eds. InterVarsity 1995  
s.v. ‘Sunday’

“ Not any ecclesiastical writer of the first three centuries attributed the origin of Sunday observance either to Christ or to His apostles.” - Sir William Domville, (Anglican) ‘Examination of the Six Texts,’ pages 6, 7. (Supplement). \_

“The current notion that Christ and His apostles authoritatively substituted the first day for the seventh, is absolutely without any authority in the New Testament.” Dr Lyman Abbot, (Congregational) "Christian Union," June 26, 1890.

“Many believe that Christ changed the Sabbath. But, from his own words, we see that He came for no such purpose. Those who believe that Jesus changed the Sabbath base it only on a supposition.” – Amos Binney (Methodist), ‘Theological Compendium’ p.180-181

“ There is no direct Scriptural authority for designating the first day ‘the Lord’s Day’” – Dr. D.H. Lucas, ( Disciples of Christ) ‘The Christian Oracle’; January 23, 1890

1. The only '*Lord's Day*' of the Bible is the seventh day Sabbath. – Ex. 20:10; Is. 58:13; Mark 2:28; Rev. 1:10
2. Jesus says that He is *Lord even* of the Sabbath day. – Matt. 12:8
3. The 1<sup>st</sup> Day is never called anything but the 1<sup>st</sup> Day in the Bible.
4. Jesus never mentions the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of the week.
5. Jesus' custom was to go to church on the Sabbath. – Luke 4:16
6. The seventh day Sabbath is mentioned more than any of the other nine commandments (59 times) in the New Testament.
7. There are 84 Sabbath meetings alluded to in the book of Acts. – Acts 13:14,44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4,11
8. There are only 8 mentions of the 1<sup>st</sup> Day in the New Testament, and only one of these is specifically referred to as a worship meeting – and that primarily during the night; and that very possibly Saturday night. (see NEB) – Matt.28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19; 1 Cor. 16:2; **Acts 20:7**
9. There is no word in the Bible which ever declares the 1<sup>st</sup> Day to be Blessed, sanctified, holy, sacred, or special in any way. There is no blessing pronounced on its observance. There is no regulation on how it is to be observed. There is no law to enforce its observance. There is no penalty for its violation.
10. Rather than abolishing the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment – Jesus spent more time dealing with this commandment than the other nine – explaining through example how it might 'lawfully' be observed. – Matt. 12:9-13 (Matt. 5:17-19)
11. Jesus' disciples rested according to the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment after the example of Jesus (who is also the Creator) – while at the same time Jesus the Savior rested in the tomb after finishing the work of redemption. – Luke 23:56
12. Jesus told His disciples to prayerfully consider the Sabbath 37 years after He would ascend to heaven. – Matt. 24:20
13. The four gospels were written from 30-70 years after the ascension of Christ – yet no mention is made of any change of the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment.
14. Of all the accusations brought against Paul, he was never accused of Sabbath-breaking.
15. Much of the work of the apostle Paul had to do with the controversy surrounding the abolishment of circumcision (a part of the ceremonial law), yet no controversy surrounding an alteration of one of the Ten Commandments (moral law) is found in the New Testament (a controversy which surely would have eclipsed that of circumcision). On the contrary, Paul says clearly,

“Circumcision is nothing and Uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.” – 1Cor. 7:19 (NKJV)

16. The Lord says the Sabbath should be called a delight and honorable, not A legalistic burden. – Is. 58:13  
Paul says the Ten Commandments are holy, just, and good. – Rom. 7:12
17. Paul’s custom was to go to church on the Sabbath. – Acts 17:2,3
18. Paul sought to make special prayer on the Sabbath even when there was No synagogue, or Jews, around. – Acts 16:3
19. The Gentiles requested that Paul wait a full week to preach to them on The next Sabbath day – even though the very next day (Sunday) was supposedly their day – and, Paul complied. – Acts 13:42
20. God pronounced a special blessing on all the Gentiles who would keep the Sabbath in a prophecy that applies to the Christian dispensation. - Is. 56:6,7  
He also pronounces the Sabbath to be a perpetual day of weekly worship for ‘all flesh’ in the New Earth. – Is. 66:22,23
21. Jesus (the Creator) says that the Sabbath was made for all mankind (gk. ‘Anthropos’) – not just for the Jews. – Mark 2:27
22. The book of Hebrews says that there remains a “keeping of the Sabbath” (gk. ‘Sabbatismos’) for the people of God. – Heb. 4:9
23. The Ten Commandments are eternal in heaven. – Rev. 11:19

Romans 14 and Colossians 2 are the most frequently quoted justifications for an abolished seventh day Sabbath. Neither of these texts specifically abolishes any day. The language of both passages is also difficult to understand (as with many of Paul’s other statements – 1 Pet. 3:15,16).

In Romans 14 it is not at all clear that the seventh day Sabbath, or the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is even referred to. No reference is made to the Sabbath, or the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, either specifically or contextually. The prominent feature of the passage is the concept of abstinence. The two cases of eating/not-eating versus days/no-days are mentioned in a parallel correlation. One major conclusion to be made from this observation is that Paul is referring to fast/abstinence days and the observance (or non-observance) of such days. This chapter begins with the expression, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things.” Is the observance of one of the Ten Commandments to be considered a potentially doubtful thing observed by weak people? Surely not!

Colossians 2:14-17 (the most often quoted text for the abolishment of the Sabbath) is likewise not a clear indication of a nullified or altered 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. It is not at all clear that the 'handwriting' ('cheirographon', occurring only once in the Bible) that is 'blotted out' in verse 14 is a reference to the ten commandments (as though stone could be nailed to wood). Nor is it clear that the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is to be included in whatever that document may be. Many prominent scholars have historically interpreted verse 16, "Let no man judge you...regarding...sabbaths." As referring to ceremonial 'sabbaths' of the ceremonial law – as opposed to The seventh day Sabbath of the 'Moral Law' (ten commandments).

“The annual sabbaths have come to an end with the Jewish services to which they belong. The weekly Sabbath rests on a more permanent foundation having been instituted in paradise to commemorate the completion of creation in six days.” Jamison/Faucett/Brown commentary on Collosians 2

Finally, Paul does not command the Colossian Christians to stop observing 'sabbaths'; but instead, commands the brethren not to judge one another if they do. The question one must ask is, "can we regard the Ten Commandments as the ten 'suggestions' – or the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment as the 4<sup>th</sup> personal preference not to be judged?" If we do, perhaps we need a more substantial basis than these difficult; and, for many, ambiguous texts.