

Bible Studies

Why do we meet on Sunday?

Read Exodus 20v8-11

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Exodus 20:8

This is the 4th of the 10 commandments. It is also the one with the longest explanation. Deut 5v12

"There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD. Leviticus 23:3

What Day is the Sabbath day?

What Four things does God command regarding the Sabbath?

Leviticus 23:3

What reason did God give for setting it apart?

How does this reason effect us today?

The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word for rest.

The Sabbath day had another more significant meaning.

What was it? Exodus 31v14-17

The Sabbath was the sign of the covenant God made with the people at Sinai. Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and water baptism seems to be the New Covenant sign. To fail to keep the Sabbath was cut yourself off from God's covenant. This was why violating the Sabbath was so serious.

What happened to the man who gathered wood of the Sabbath? Num15v32-36

How does this reason effect us today?

Many people suppose that the Sabbath day is Sunday. When issues like Sunday trading arise we usually use OT passages such as the above ones to promote our case. In fact the Seventh day is Saturday. Sunday is in reality the First day of the week. So why do we meet on Sunday?

References to Sunday in the New Testament?

What happened on these days?

Matthew 28v1 1 Corinthians 16v2
Acts 20v7 Revelation 1v10

Do any of these passages suggest that the early church met on Sundays?

Obviously they did, but none of these passages identify it as the day of worship. The communion service (breaking of bread) often seems to have been on a Sundays. The church that modelled it's worship closely on the synagogue generally it met on Saturdays. All the early documentation strongly suggests that Saturday, in keeping with the Old Testament, was the major day of worship for Christians.

Does the New Testament instruct us to worship on Sunday?

Does it prohibit worship on a Sunday?

NB it was only in the first century that Rome adopted the seven day week.

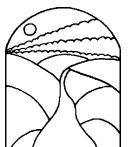
Sunday is so named because it was the day the sun was worshipped. Saturn was worshiped on Saturday. The Romans held Sunday to be the most important day.

S
T
R
E
A
M
S

I
N

T
H
E

D
E
S
E
R
T



Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz
WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

When Did it Change?

The change seems to have occurred as late as 135 AD. This is the date of the second Jewish revolt under Bar Kokva. The emperor Hadrian laid siege Jerusalem, when he had taken the city he barred Jews and Jewish-Christians from the city, he also instigated strong laws against the Jew, notably banning circumcision and worship on Saturdays. The Church was included in this ban. It was the Romans who forced Christians to meet on a Sunday.

Could they have continued to meet on a Saturday?

Why didn't they?

At the time the Church wanted to disassociate itself from the Jewish synagogue, a wave of anti-Semitism swept through the Church. The Church seems to have adopted Sunday worship enthusiastically, taking steps to discourage Sabbath worship e.g. making Saturday a fast day. It is regrettable that the Church eradicated so much of its Jewish heritage only to adopt a pagan one in its place.

This desire to cast off Judaism predated Hadrian. The earliest reference to Sunday as a worship day is found in **Ignatius to the Magnesians** :9 (c115AD) "*No longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day.*" He identifies the Lord's day with the day Jesus rose from the grave. The context here shows the reason clearly to be separation from Judaism.

Epistle of **Barnabas** 18:8 (c135). Expounds the day=1000 years view of the Lord's return and then says. "I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world, wherefore also we keep the eighth day for rejoicing in the which also Jesus rose from the dead."

Both Barnabas and Justin (1 Apology 67) give the resurrection as only the second reason for worshipping on Sunday. Justin's first reason was "because it is the first day on which God, transforming the darkness and prime matter, created the world".

It was finally the Emperor Constantine (321 AD, the first Christian Roman Emperor) who declared Sunday the only day of worship.

Does it matter?

I think you will agree that the reasons for change were less than wholesome. The question is does it matter? Should we like the Seventh Day Adventist, change back?

The reason the Sabbath was so holy was that it was a sign of the Sinai Covenant. To not keep Sabbath was to break the Covenant. But we live under a New Covenant and keeping Sabbath is not the sign of our covenant. Therefore it does not have the same burning significance for us.

Romans 14v5-6, Colossians 2v16, Galatians 4v10

There are a variety of ways these verses can be interpreted. (The JW's use them to ban birthday celebrations.) It is clear that observing the Sabbath is not mandatory. But on the other hand neither is it wrong or heretical.

Is worshipping on Sunday better than worshipping on Saturday?

Under what conditions might you worship on a Saturday?

Is one day more spiritual, or acceptable to God than another?

Many Messianic Jewish Groups meet on Saturday. I believe it would be wrong for them to do otherwise.

Another View

There is another way of looking at this whole debate. It is pointed out that since God does not get tired, physical rest cannot have been the major reason he rested on the Sabbath. Hebrews 4, explains that the Sabbath is a type of Salvation by grace through faith and not by works. To enter into the Sabbath rest is to accept Jesus work on the Cross, rather than your own efforts at salvation.

In this view to keep Sabbath takes on a whole new meaning, totally divorced from how either Saturday or Sunday are treated.

What then does it mean to Keep Sabbath?

Two things that are wrong.

One of the problems that is associated with Sabbath keepers is a tendency to legalism. It can be part of an attempt to "keep the law". This is wrong we cannot keep the law, we live under grace.

The second thing that is wrong is to treat Sunday as a replacement Sabbath, to make out it is Christian Sabbath and insist on its observance.

This is not a big issue it should not be made into one.