

**THE SABBATH  
VS SUNDAY  
CONTROVERSY**

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# Introduction

- Respect and friendship
- “Fear and Trembling”
- Apologetics vs. Scholarship
- An Eastern perspective...

# "4 Views" - 3

1. View that Saturday is the day of Christian rest and worship + that Sunday is not appointed for Christians.
2. View that Sunday is Sabbath worship / rest for Christians...
3. View that the Sabbath as a Law was abolished at the cross + Christian worship is Sunday but Sabbath remains Saturday and a special day

# Simple and Complex answers

- We all like simple answers...
- But in science true is often difficult or even hazy...
- A complex topic...
- 2 easy views... end of the story...

$$\psi(\dots; \mathbf{r}_i, \sigma_i; \dots; \mathbf{r}_j, \sigma_j; \dots) \stackrel{!}{=} (-1)^{2S} \cdot \psi(\dots; \mathbf{r}_j, \sigma_j; \dots; \mathbf{r}_i, \sigma_i; \dots)$$

# A concern for Christians...

- “It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week....where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament. Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history as a religious day, as we learn from the Christian Fathers and other sources. But what a pity that it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of a sun god, when adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism!” - Dr. Edward Hiscox, author of The Baptist Manual
- Roman Catholic view: the Church has the authority...

## A major issue: true worship – obedience to God's commandments!

- Has Sabbath (keeping 4<sup>th</sup> commandment) been transferred to Sunday? (Where? Why?)
- Did the Roman Catholic Church “change” the Sabbath? (When? Who?)
- Are we under the 10 commandments as given on Sinai?
- When should Christians worship and rest?
- **How do we find the true answer?**

# Terminology and Methods

- Define words...
  - E.g. “Holy Scriptures”, “God”
  - Perhaps “Sabbath” “Church”
  - Negative associations
  - Foreign words “theos” “kyriake”
- Methods and assumptions...
  - Blank slate?
  - Proposed method...



# Finding an answer...

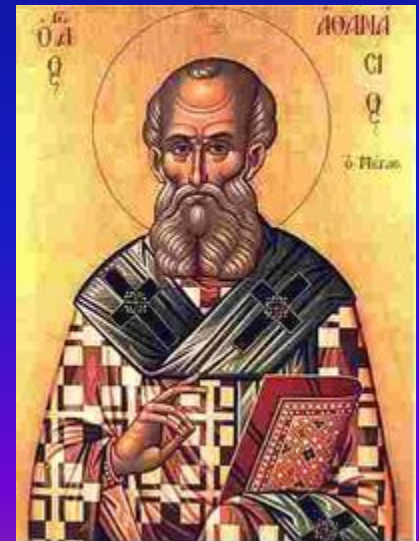


- What authority?
- “Turn to the Bible”! Problem Interpretation...  
“Listen to the Church” “We have a prophet”
- What Bible?
- How do we know what books are in the Bible?
- The case of Revelation
- Does the Early Church matter?
- An eyewitness: Eusebius
- Athanasius in 367 – first list...



# Does it matter?

- Quote by Lee McDonald: ""
- We trust them for the Bible – what about the rest?
- What do they say?



# First point – What really happened?

- Hebrew Christians and Gentile Christians...
- Hebrew Christians kept the Sabbath (& hours) but also... all Christians assembled to worship on the Lord's Day (Sunday) as the normative day of worship, documented since 120 AD (see after)
- Most Christians also held services on Sabbath but Gentiles Christians did not have to observe a Sabbath rest (and they could not)
- Persecutions until 313, then Sunday rest law 321 (no rest day before that)
- Sabbath was not transferred to Sunday! (Great Lent p. 67)
- Sabbath worship gradually fell out of popular favor for various (good and bad) reasons...

# What about Constantine?



- View of a change in 321 (first law) with Constantine
- Among Adventists, view has changed (Dr. Samuel Bacchiocchi) because evidence of second century
- What about the Roman Catholic Church changing the day? (below)

# Evidence

- Letter of Barnabas c. 80
- Didache c. 100 (disputed)
- Ignatius +120 (sometimes disputed) (“no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again”)
- Pliny (Roman official) 110 AD (“certain fixed day before it was light”)
- Justin +150 (clear) (DECB, page 406)
- Tertullian +200 (clear)
- Origen +250
- *During persecutions...*

# Sabbath and/to Sunday: why?

- Church authority? Bible? Apostles? Good reason?
- Not Sabbath “against” Sunday
- The 7<sup>th</sup> day remains the (old) Sabbath
- The Lord’s Day is the day of New Creation
  
- Seal of creation – old creation...
- Given at Sinai to old Israel
  
- But Christ:
  - New creation (compare Genesis 1; 2 Co. 5:17; Gal. 6:16)
  - New Adam, New Israel, New Covenant (Jer. 31:31), New Law
  - New Seal, New Day!



# Initial fervor (when possible)...

- Sabbath and Kyriake both “feasts” with gathering, scripture readings and Eucharist... “used for relative rest and edification – to enjoy the Lord!”
- Sozomen (450): “The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria...”
- Socrates (400s): “For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week (in addition to the Lord’s day), yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.”

# And minimized...

- But Sabbath represents the shadow and the Lord's day the light...
- Convenience, laziness and anti-semitism...
- Reduced to "Sabbath vespers" (Sunset to Sunrise)
- Or 1 / 7 principle reduced to one day – the Lord's day
- Today – a challenge to enjoy the Lord!

# Summary – 2 views / arguments

- Normative day of worship is the first day (Lord's day) – biblical indications but no direct commandment\* + Early Church practice
- Law (including Sinai commandments) fulfilled
- New Creation – new "Day"
- All commandments reinstated except Sabbath\*
- Change of "treaty" or "covenant"

# Sabbath-keeping view:

- “Commandments” = 10
- 10 Commandments are eternal
- Jesus (+Paul) kept the Sabbath
- No explicit commandment in NT
- Sunday is pagan / imposed by Constantine (321) and changed by the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church (vision)

# However...

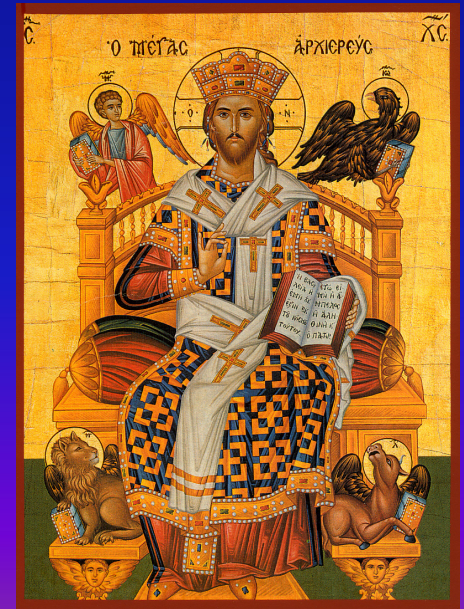
- Prologue 10 commandments (Ex. 20:2)
- Geography: Palestine...
- 2 Corinthians 3:
  - the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones ... abolished [fading] v7
  - ministry of condemnation... abolished [fades away] v9,11
  - the old covenant... is abolished [removed] in Christ, v14
  - but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil [10 commandments] is abolished [taken away] v16

### C . Graphic outline of 2 Corinthians 3:

<b>Old covenant</b>	<b>New covenant</b>
"tablets of stone" (v. 3, 7)	"tablets of flesh" (v. 3)
"letter" (v. 6)	"Spirit" (v. 6)
"kills" (v. 6)	"gives life"(v.6)
"ministration of death & condemnation" (v. 7, 9)	"ministration of Spirit righteousness"(v. 8, 9)
"glorious" (v. 7)	"much more glorious" (v. 11)
Abolished v7,11,13,14	Remains v11

# Jesus as Word and Law

- A relationship with a code vs. a person
- Jesus new Moses
- Jesus as Lord is the Law
- Matthew 25
- Ark: rod, manna, tablets
- Galatians 5-6



#1 You shall not have any other Gods beside me.

Brought forward into the new covenant in Acts 14:15

#2 You shall not carve idols for yourselves.

Brought forward into the new covenant in 1 Thess 1:9

#3 You shall not take the name of God in vain.

Brought forward into the new covenant in Eph 4:29

#4 Six days you shall work, but the 7th day is the Sabbath.

Still nailed to the cross, never brought forward: Col 2:14-17 No command to keep the sabbath in the entire New Testament!

#5 Honor your father and mother.

Brought forward into the new covenant in Eph 6:1-2

#6 You shall not kill.

Brought forward into the new covenant in 1 Jn 3:15

#7 You shall not commit adultery.

Brought forward into the new covenant in Heb 13:4

#8 You shall not steal.

Brought forward into the new covenant in Eph 4:28

#9 You shall not bear false witness.

Brought forward into the new covenant in Col 3:9

#10 You shall not covet.

Brought forward into the new covenant in Eph 5:5

# Eastern Christianity (p. 67)

- Eastern Orthodox Church distinguishes between "the Sabbath" (Saturday) and "the Lord's Day" (Sunday), and both continue to play a special role for the faithful. Many parishes and monasteries will serve the Divine Liturgy on both Saturday morning and Sunday morning. The church never allows strict fasting on any Saturday (except Holy Saturday) or Sunday. During Great Lent, when the celebration of the Liturgy is forbidden on weekdays, there is always Liturgy on Saturday as well as Sunday. The church also has a special cycle of Bible readings (Epistle and Gospel) for Saturdays and Sundays which is different from the cycle of readings allotted to weekdays. However, the Lord's Day, being a celebration of the Resurrection, is clearly given more emphasis.
- In part, the reason Orthodox Christians continue to celebrate Saturday as the Sabbath is because of its role in the history of salvation: it was on a Saturday that Jesus "rested" in the tomb after his work on the cross. For this reason also, Saturday is a day for general commemoration of the departed, and special requiem hymns are often chanted on this day.
- The Ethiopian Orthodox church (part of the Oriental Orthodox communion, having about 40 million members) observes both Saturday and Sunday as holy, but places extra emphasis on Sunday.

# Conclusion

- “We need to shadows to fully appreciate the light”
- “Remember to rest and enjoy the Lord!”
- “A new creation is everything”

# More information / Q&A