

REST IN CHRIST

SATURDAY OR SUNDAY?

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Rest in Christ: Saturday or Sunday?

Saturday and the law

Whatever Bible you use, if you open it to the book of Exodus chapter 20, in verses eight through eleven you will read something similar to this:

“ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the Sabbath day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. You shall not do any work on it; neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor the stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy .”

This may surprise you. This is the fourth commandment, among the ten that God himself gave and wrote with his finger on stone tablets. Along with this commandment, which expresses God's will for man regarding the Sabbath, are the other nine of the Decalogue: “ You shall have no other gods before me ,” “ You shall not kill ,” “ You shall not steal ,” etc.

Perhaps you have been surprised, because of the changes introduced by the authority that man has attributed to himself, and today the popular and modified version of God's law is widely known, while the original as God gave it is widely ignored.

Particularly unknown is the true Sabbath as presented in the Bible. If you have taken the time to consult your Bible, you will have been able to verify that this is the real situation.

Of course, not everyone has agreed with the human manipulation of God's law. Yet—and paradoxically—the majority of Christendom has adopted Sunday as the Sabbath, whether or not it professes to recognize the human authority that claimed the right to institute it in place of the Sabbath by arguments that are entirely extrabiblical.

There is a very serious question that immediately arises: Does man have the authority to change God's law? In other words, can the creature choose his own moral law apart from that instituted by his Creator? The consequences are tremendous, for if man can change God's clear instruction about the Sabbath, then he can also change the other nine commandments, such as "Thou shalt not kill," etc. Perhaps even more important: since the Law expresses the character of the Lawgiver and is inseparably identified with him, in changing the Law we are really changing "god." What was the teaching of the greatest Teacher the human race has ever known? Jesus said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to annul, but to fulfill. Truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter, not the smallest dot, will by any means pass away until all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18).

So neither the death nor resurrection of Christ changes the Sabbath commandment, unless it changes or abolishes all the others as well,

but can anyone provide the slightest biblical reason why since Christ died and rose again we can now kill, steal, take God's name in vain, etc.? Is there the slightest indication that it was the Sabbath commandment in particular that was to be abolished at the cross?

This article is intended to draw your attention to the fact that it is precisely through the observance of the biblical Sabbath that man's privilege is to demonstrate his fidelity to his Creator, to acknowledge his trust in Him and his dependence on Him. The fact that Christ died on a cross for man in no way negates the fact that He Himself is his Creator. On the contrary, it further strengthens the bond of love between the creature and its Creator, who is now also its Redeemer (Isaiah 44:24 ; Colossians 1:13-17).

In the following points I briefly indicate how the Bible answers very important questions, such as when was the Sabbath instituted? What Sabbath day did Jesus keep? What Sabbath day did the apostles keep? What is the only day mentioned in the Bible by its specific name? What day will continue to be kept in the new promised land?

We hope that in this reading you will find for yourself a truth that will bring you closer to God through the free and sovereign exercise of your own freedom of conscience. This is the only way that God and his children can communicate.

Biblical facts regarding the Sabbath

- After working six days in the creation of the earth, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3) [Until a few years ago, dictionaries unanimously recognized Saturday as the “seventh day of the week.” In recent years, the latest updates to some Spanish dictionaries are attempting to redefine the order of the days in accordance with popular belief, which contributes to masking the biblical truth in this regard].
- The Creator blessed the seventh day (Genesis 2:3).
- God sanctified the seventh day (Exodus 20:11).
- It was instituted before the entrance of sin; therefore, it is not a type , since types were not introduced until sin had entered.
- Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27); that is, for the human race, therefore, both Gentiles and Jews are called to observe it.
- Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).
- It is a memorial of creation (Exodus 20:11 and 31:17).
- It is not a Jewish institution, as it was established some 2,300 years before a single Jew existed.

- The Bible never calls it the Jewish Sabbath, but always “ the Sabbath of the Lord your God .”
- It was part of God's law before it was given at Sinai (Exodus 16:4 and 27-29).
- God placed it at the very heart of His moral law (Exodus 20:1-17). Why would He place it there if it were not permanent and immutable, like the other nine commandments?
- It was commanded by the very voice of God (Deuteronomy 4:12-13).
- God wrote it with his own finger (Exodus 31:18).
- He engraved it in stone to indicate its perpetuity (Deuteronomy 5:22).
- It was preserved in the ark located in the second apartment of the sanctuary, or most holy place (Deuteronomy 10:1-5).
- God forbade all secular activity on the Sabbath day, even in the most pressing times (Exodus 34:21).
- The Israelites perished in the desert because they desecrated the holy Sabbath (Ezekiel 20:12-13).

- It is a sign of the true God. It enables him to be distinguished from false gods (Ezekiel 20:20).
- God promised that Jerusalem would stand forever if the Sabbath was kept (Jeremiah 17:24-25).
- God's people went into Babylonian captivity for violating Him (Nehemiah 13:18).
- God destroyed Jerusalem for violating the Sabbath (Jeremiah 17:27).
- God has pronounced a special blessing on all Gentiles who keep it (Isaiah 56:6-7).
- This blessing is found in the prophecy that refers to the Christian dispensation (Isaiah 56).
- God has promised to bless anyone who keeps the Sabbath (Isaiah 56:2).
- The Lord wants us to consider the Sabbath as “ a delight ,” “ holy ,” “ the glory of the Lord ” (Isaiah 58:13). This is the opposite of calling it “the old Jewish Sabbath,” “the yoke of bondage,” etc.
- After having been trampled on for “ many generations ,” the holy Sabbath is finally to be restored in the last days (Isaiah 58:12-13).

- All the holy prophets kept the seventh day, or Sabbath.
- When the Son of Man was on this earth, He kept the seventh-day Sabbath throughout His life (Luke 4:16 ; John 15:10). In this way, He followed the example of His Father in creation. Is it not decidedly good that we follow the example of both the Father and the Son?
- The seventh day is the day of the Lord (relates Revelation 1:10 with Mark 2:28 , Isaiah 58:13 and Exodus 20:10).
- Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).
- Jesus vindicated the Sabbath as an institution designed for the benefit of man (Mark 2:23-28).
- Far from abolishing it, Jesus carefully taught how the Sabbath should be kept (Matthew 12:1-13).
- He taught his disciples not to do anything unlawful on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12).
- Jesus instructed his apostles that the Sabbath would continue to be kept 40 years after his resurrection (Matthew 24:20).
- The holy women who had been with Jesus reverently kept the Sabbath after his death on the cross (Luke 23:56).

- Thirty years after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit expressly called it a “ Sabbath ” (Acts 13:14).
- Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, called it a “ sabbath day ” in A.D. 45 (Acts 13:27).
- Luke, the inspired Christian historian writing in A.D. 62, calls it a “ Sabbath ” (Acts 13:44).
- The converted Gentiles called it the Sabbath (Acts 13:42).
- In the great Christian Council held in the year 52 A.D. in the presence of the apostles and thousands of disciples, James calls it a “ day of rest ” (Acts 15:21).
- It was customary to have prayer meetings on that day (Acts 16:13).
- Paul read the Scriptures publicly on that day (Acts 17:2-3).
- Paul used to preach on that day (Acts 17:2).
- The book of Acts records countless meetings held on that day (Acts 13:14 and 44 ; 16:13 ; 17:2 and 18:4).
- There was never any dispute between Christians and Jews regarding the Sabbath. This proves that Christians unanimously observed the same day as the Jews.

- Among all the accusations the Jews brought against Paul, none was that he violated the Sabbath. Why didn't they do so if he had been a Sabbath-breaker?
- Paul himself expressly declared that he had kept the law. “ Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I sinned in any way ” (Acts 25:8). How could this have been true if he had not kept the Sabbath?
- In the New Testament, Saturday is mentioned 59 times, and always with deference, giving it the same title it had in the Old Testament: “ the Sabbath day .”
- Nothing is said in the New Testament about the Sabbath rest being abolished, set aside, changed, or anything of the sort.
- God has never authorized anyone to work on that day.
- According to the Bible record, no New Testament Christian did ordinary work on the seventh day, either before or after the resurrection. There is not a single example of such a thing. Why would Christians today act any differently than Christians in the Bible?
- There is no record of God ever removing His blessings or sanctifying the seventh day.

- Just as the Sabbath was kept in Eden before the entrance of sin, so it will be observed eternally on the new earth after the restoration (Isaiah 66:22-23).
- The Sabbath rest—the seventh day of the week—is a part of God’s law as it came from His mouth and as He wrote with His own finger on the stone tablets at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20). When Jesus began His work, He expressly declared that He had not come to destroy the law: “ Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill ” (Matthew 5:17).
- Jesus severely condemned the Pharisees and called them hypocrites for claiming to love God while at the same time invalidating one of the Ten Commandments because of their traditions. Sunday observance is nothing more than a tradition of men.

Biblical facts regarding Sunday

- The first thing recorded in the Bible is that Sunday, the first day of the week, is a common work day (Genesis 1:1-5). This was determined by the Creator Himself.
- God commanded men to work on the first day of the week, including it in the “ six days ” of work (Exodus 20:8-11).
- None of the patriarchs kept Sunday.

- None of the prophets kept Sunday.
- By God's express command, His people used the first day of the week as a common work day for at least 4,000 years.
- God includes it within the set of the “ six days of work ” (Ezekiel 46:1).
- God did not rest on that day.
- God never blessed him.
- Christ did not rest on that day.
- Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3) and worked in his shop until he was 30 years old. He kept the Sabbath (as noted in the biblical facts concerning the Sabbath) but he worked six days a week, as everyone admits. The kind of work he did on Sunday must have been hard work indeed.
- The apostles worked on Sunday throughout their lives.
- Christ never blessed Sunday.
- He has never been blessed by any divine authority.
- He has never been sanctified.

- No biblical law was ever given to enforce Sunday observance, so it is not a transgression to work on that day. “ For where there is no law, there is no transgression ” (Romans 4:15 ; John 3:4).
- The New Testament nowhere prohibits working on that day.
- There is no penalty in the Bible for breaking Sunday.
- No blessing is promised for those who observe Sunday.
- There is no regulation as to how it should be observed. Would that be the case if God wanted us to observe it?
- The Bible never calls it the Christian rest.
- He never calls it Saturday.
- He never calls it the Lord's day.
- He never calls it a day of rest either.
- No sacred title has ever been applied to him. Why should we call him a saint?
- It is simply called “ the first day of the week .”
- Jesus never mentioned it in any sense. The name of this day was not on his lips, as far as the records show.

- The word Sunday never appears in the Bible [some Spanish versions have added the word “Sunday” to the text of Revelation 1:10 . This is an unacceptable interpretive translation, since the original simply says “ on the Lord’s day ”].
- The first day of the week is mentioned eight times throughout the New Testament (Matthew 28:1 ; Mark 16:2 and 9 ; Luke 24:1 ; John 20:1 and 19 ; Acts 20:7 ; 1 Corinthians 16:2).
- Six of these texts refer to the same fact.
- Paul instructed the saints to attend to secular matters on that day (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- In the entire New Testament we have only one record of a meeting (the Passover) held on that day, and that took place in the evening (Acts 20:5-12), after midnight (verses 7-11). Jesus kept the Passover on Thursday evening (Luke 22), and the disciples, for a time, kept it every day (Acts 2:42-46).
- The Bible nowhere says that the first day of the week commemorates the resurrection of Christ. This is a tradition of men, which invalidates the law of God (Matthew 15:1-9). According to biblical teaching, baptism is what commemorates the burial and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-5).

- Finally, the New Testament is completely silent regarding any change in the day of the week reserved for worshiping God and attesting to our dependence on Him.

Saturday and the Gospel

So far we have referred primarily to the Sabbath in the context of God's immutable law, but it is even more important to consider it in the context of the gospel, as the one true " day of the Lord ."

Although the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27-28), the Bible always presents it as the day that belongs to the Lord, not to man (and even less to the Jews). This is clearly seen in Isaiah 58:13 , Exodus 31:13 , 20:10 , etc. It is the day that will be kept by those who recognize themselves as the Lord's property.

It is important to note that the Christian never obtains moral rectitude by observing the biblical Sabbath or by exercising obedience to any other rule or law, however virtuous it may be. The perversion of the true Sabbath of the Lord consists in considering, as the Jews often did, that observing that day, or keeping any other of the commandments, makes one morally approved. According to this mentality, the Sabbath is a "work." But the same can be true of any other Christian duty.

The Sabbath that the Bible presents is exactly the opposite: it is a rest! The believer who keeps the biblical Sabbath does not believe himself to be righteous because he keeps it, but quite the contrary,

he keeps it because he recognizes himself as unworthy, and rests in the justice, goodness and power of Christ, both in creation and in redemption. He recognizes in Christ the origin of all material and spiritual good. That is why the Sabbath is precisely the sign of the justice that comes through faith in Christ. Not the justice that supposedly springs from man, but the justice that man receives from Christ as an undeserved gift. It is a rest for man, which allows him to rest in the perfect and complete work of God (Exodus 31:13 ; Matthew 11:28).

In the creation account, the Sabbath was the day that reminded man that all he was and possessed was entirely due to God. Adam and Eve did not “help” God in creation, but simply received it from him. Nor did they rest on the Sabbath because they were tired, for their first Sabbath was also their first full day of existence. Each Sabbath they remembered and expressed their recognition of and dependence on God. It was the seal of their trust—or faith—in him, the recognition of their belonging to him.

Now, what is Sunday a seal of? Who does it represent? Can Sunday demonstrate man's perfect trust in the goodness of God's laws? On the contrary, it expresses trust in the authority of man, to whom we owe the paternity in the change of the Sabbath. Can Sunday serve as a reminder of creation and of the Creator? No, since its protagonist is the authority of man, the making and legislation of man. It cannot be the " day of the Lord ," but the day of man.

On the other hand, any day of the week that is used as a simple psychological and physical rest can be valid as a day of man, but only the Sabbath that God has instituted can demonstrate man's faith in his Creator. Therefore, on the Sabbath, man rests in God. On Sunday, however, man pays homage to his own work.

In the Bible, the Sabbath is frequently used to refer to the experience of salvation in Jesus received by faith (Matthew 11:28 ; Hebrews 4:2-3). Since the entrance of sin, the promise of entering into rest (symbolizing salvation) has been linked with the Sabbath. For example, all the Jewish festivals pointed to the Messiah and were called Sabbaths (days of rest), in addition to the weekly Sabbaths . [These types or symbols of Christ's work—belonging to the Jewish liturgy, or “ceremonial law”—were done away with when the reality of Christ's sacrifice on the cross took place.]

The Sabbath reminds us that, both in creation and in redemption, man does not begin by doing something, but begins by resting, receiving through faith the complete and perfect work of God in Christ. In redemption, man begins by resting from his deficient works, in order to place himself in the hands of the perfect works of God. As in creation, he must first receive life and spiritual existence in Christ. The Sabbath reminds us that it is not man who works, but God (in Christ). That is why the Bible calls the Sabbath “ my holy day ,” and only this can be the authentic symbol of the work of redemption.

In both creation and redemption, Christ finished his work on a sixth day of the week (Friday) and rested on the seventh (Saturday). He was resurrected on a first day (Sunday) to ascend to heaven and begin another work there, that of restoration (John 14:1-3). When this work has come to an end, we will fully enter into the rest referred to in Hebrews 4. Once again, only the biblical Sabbath can adequately symbolize it (for example, in verse 9, the word that Spanish Bibles usually translate as “rest” in the original Greek corresponds to *sabatismos* : literally, Sabbath rest).

The Sabbath, then, points man to God, to a perfect and finished work which the believer receives by faith, and is thus the seal or sign of the righteousness that comes by faith. Sunday points to man's authority to change the Sabbath, signifies self-exaltation (the opposite of dependence on God), and cannot point to a perfect and completed work done by God on behalf of man, and received by faith. It is, therefore, the seal or sign of the righteousness that comes by works, the homage to man's work and authority, in opposition to God.

Saturday and you

The last pages of the Bible present the closing scenes of world history. There mankind is described as divided into two distinct groups. One group pays homage to God, with particular mention of His attribute of Creator (Revelation 14:7-12). The other group pays homage to the supplanting power instituted by man. There is no third group.

Dear reader, sooner or later you will have to choose which of the two groups you will be in.

Christ created you, gave you all you have and all you are. He is seeking you. If you have any doubt about that, go to Gethsemane and Calvary and see what the Son of God wanted to give for your salvation. He did everything necessary for you to be in the group described in this verse:

“ Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ! ” (Revelation 14:12).

“ I [Christ] am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according to his work... Blessed are those who keep His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city! ” (Revelation 22:12-14).

That is also my sincere wish.

By accepting Christ you will experience His rest, the rest of His forgiveness, the rest of His deliverance from our selfishness, the healing of our fear and guilt, the peace of resting in His acceptance. Put your hope in Christ. Look upon Him in His infinite condescension, and you will have that peace which no man can give. Choose to accept Him, and He will live in you. You will receive a new life, which is eternal. He says to you, “ Come unto me, all ye

that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest .” It is the rest which comes only from God: the rest which only the Sabbath can represent.

Saturday or Sunday? Free in God or slave of man?

Luis Bueno, 1995