

At the beginning of human history God gave to us a gift in time. That gift was the day He blessed and made holy. (Genesis 2:1-3.)

## THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH

Throughout His ministry the Pharisees challenged Jesus Christ over the Sabbath. On each occasion, Christ set about to free the Sabbath from the traditions and restrictions that the religious hierarchy had imposed upon it. He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27,28. He declared, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Matthew 12:12. Jesus Christ kept the Sabbath holy. We read, "He went to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read." Luke 4:16. Once, while discussing the ten commandments, Christ said to the Pharisees, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions." Mark 7:9. He also indicated the importance of the Sabbath for those who were to face the devastation of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. (Also read Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Luke 6:1-11; 13:10-17; John 5:9-18; 7:22-24; 9:14-16.)

The holy seventh-day Sabbath was always to be a reminder of our origins. Later it became a memorial of salvation.

### 1 SABBATH & CREATION

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... 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.

Jesus Christ is the Creator. (See John 1:1-3; Colossians 2:15-17.) He is Lord of the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27,28.) In the final presentation of the gospel, God's people will draw attention to the fact that God is the Creator. (Revelation 14:6,7. Compare Revelation 3:14.) In that the Sabbath commandment draws attention to this, Satan has tried to destroy the Sabbath so that God's Creatorship would be obscured, for as soon as people forget their origins they stray from God.

Whenever people have forgotten the Sabbath of the Creator they have strayed from Him into idolatry. (See Ezekiel 20:16; Isaiah 17:7-10; 51:12,13; Jeremiah 3:21,22. Also see Revelation 13:4,15; 21:8; 22:15.) And, whenever idolatry was confronted in Bible times, the Creatorship of God was upheld. (See Isaiah 40:18-22,26,28; Jeremiah 10:1-16.)

The focus of the seventh-day Sabbath is Jesus Christ the Creator. Without a Creator we have evolution. Without a Creator there is no divine law. Without law there is no sin. Without sin there is no need for a Saviour. And without a Saviour there is no hope for this sad world. When we "remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy," (Exodus 20:8) we remember that JESUS MADE US. The gospel proclaims that we WORSHIP the CREATOR. (Revelation 14:7.)

### 2 SABBATH & SALVATION

"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you... Remember that you were slaves... and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." Deuteronomy 5:12,15.

After the entrance of sin, and the physical and spiritual slavery that it brings, the Sabbath also became a memorial of deliverance through the Saviour. The Sabbath is a symbol of the rest of redemption. "There remains then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." Hebrews 4:9,10. (Compare Matthew 11:28-30; Ezekiel 20:12,20.)

Those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night, (Revelation 14:11) whereas those who worship the Creator-Saviour will rest from their labours. (Revelation 14:13.) Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath for He is CREATOR and SAVIOUR. The gospel proclaims that we WORSHIP the CREATOR-SAVIOUR. (Revelation 14:6.)

## THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

Since Saturday is the Sabbath, why do so many Christians worship on Sunday? The most common reason given is that Jesus Christ and His apostles changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday to celebrate the resurrection. A more recent explanation of the demise of the Sabbath is that the Lord no longer requires worship on a particular day.

The fact is: nowhere in all of Scripture is there a single sentence that suggests that God has made any change to the day of worship. There are only eight references to the first day of the week, or Sunday, in the New Testament. Five of these refer to the events of the early morning on the resurrection Sunday:

### 1 The morning of Resurrection Sunday

**Reference 1:** "After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb." Matthew 28:1.

**Reference 2:** "When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb..." Mark 16:1,2.

**Reference 3:** "When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons." Mark 16:9.

**Reference 4:** "On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb." Luke 24:1 NIV.

**Reference 5:** "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance." John 20:1.

Some of these gospel writers wrote many years after the resurrection, and yet in these references there is no indication, and certainly no command,

that the first day of the week was to be regarded by Christians as a special day. Luke's silence on this issue is of particular significance. At the beginning of his second book he wrote concerning the contents of the Gospel of Luke. He declared, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen." Acts 1:1,2. Clearly, Jesus Christ gave no command or instruction concerning the first day of the week being a new holy day or worship day for Christians.

### 2 The evening of Resurrection Sunday

**Reference 6:** "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'" John 20:19.

Some believe that this Sunday evening meeting of the disciples was the beginning of a new day of worship in honour of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, the disciples had not gathered in honour of the resurrection, for at that time they did not believe that their Lord had risen. (See Mark 16:9-14.) They had gathered for they were afraid of the Jews.

### 3 The Meeting at Troas

**Reference 7:** "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight." Acts 20:7.

Paul and his companions were about to leave Troas. The night before they left, Paul preached a farewell message to the people. The breaking of bread did not necessarily mean the Lord's Supper or Communion. However, even if it was the Communion that they shared, that service did not give the day any particular significance over other days for members of the early church daily "broke bread in their homes." Acts 2:46. (Compare Acts 2:42.) At midnight, while Paul was preaching, a young man fell from a window to the pavement three stories below and was killed. After Paul had raised Eutychus to life, the meeting and rejoicing continued until morning. In that this all-night meeting took place during the dark part of the first day of the week, it was no doubt Saturday night. (See Acts 20:7 in the New English Bible.) Having a meeting, or sharing in the Communion Service, does not

make a day holy. There is no suggestion in this story of a change of holy days for the Christian church.

## 4 The Last Reference

**Reference 8:** "On the first day of the week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made." 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Paul was gathering relief funds for the poor in Jerusalem and requested that each member at Corinth set aside an amount of money, as they worked out their financial affairs, at the beginning of each week. It was not a collection at a regular church meeting. It was an appeal for an immediate need to be met by individual members. (See 2 Corinthians 9:4,5.) There is no hint of a change to the holy seventh-day Sabbath or of Sunday sacredness in this verse.■

## WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD KEEP THE LORD'S SABBATH HOLY

### 1. God says the Sabbath is holy

We read, "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Genesis 2:1-3. God says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth... but he rested on the seventh day and made it holy." Exodus 20:8-11.

### 2. God says to remember the Sabbath

Of all the ten commandments, the fourth is the one most forget. And yet God said, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." Exodus 20:8.

### 3. God says the Sabbath was made for us

The Sabbath is a gift from God, and we need it. Jesus Christ said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Mark 2:27. God foresaw our need of time for physical and mental restoration. He foresaw our need of time for family and others. Above all He has set aside the Sabbath for worship and praise. Our health and happiness are so important to God that He has commanded that we remember the Sabbath rest day "by keeping it holy." Exodus 20:8. This gift gives us time for communion with God, family fellowship, social fellowship, rest, refreshment and service.

### 4. God says the Sabbath gives freedom

The Sabbath commandment is part of the "perfect law that gives freedom." James 1:25. Error enslaves, but "the truth will set you free." John 8:32. Reading the Bible brings conviction on the truthfulness and holiness of the seventh-day Sabbath. When you observe the Sabbath as the holy day that it is, you will experience mental, physical and spiritual freedom.

### 5. God says the Sabbath is the memorial of His creative power

The holy Sabbath reminds us of our dependence upon God. He made us and He alone can meet our needs. (See Exodus 20:8-11.)

### 6. God says the Sabbath is the sign of our loyalty to Him

Jesus Christ revealed that His people are "those who obey God's commandments." Revelation 12:17. (Compare Revelation 14:12.) He said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." John 14:15. The Sabbath commandment is one of His commands. The Sabbath belongs to Jesus Christ. It reminds us of His creative power and His power to save. (See Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Exodus 20:8-11; Ezekiel 20:12,20.) The question of whether I keep the Sabbath holy comes down to allegiance. Who do I choose to worship, serve and obey? The prophet Daniel was foretold of schemes to

"try to change the set times and laws." Daniel 7:25. The facts of history reveal that during the early centuries, after the establishment of the Christian Church by Christ and the apostles, changes to the holy seventh-day Sabbath were made. Although, in Scripture there is no evidence or command for Sunday as a day of worship, we read, "The Church decreed that Christians observe Sunday as a day of rest because our religion and health require some relaxation at regular times." - John A. Hardon, S.J., *The*

*Question and Answer Catholic Catechism*, p. 135 (1981). "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. There was, and is, no Biblical basis for such a change. The Sabbath continues to be the sign of our loyalty, as believers, to Jesus Christ.■

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## IN CONCLUSION...

The Lord's supper or communion is the memorial of Jesus Christ's death. (See Matthew 26:26-30; Luke 22:19,20; 1 Corinthians 11:24-26.) Christian baptism is the memorial of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. (See Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21.) The seventh-day Sabbath is the memorial of Jesus Christ's power to create and save. The Sabbath is a Christian concept for our Lord made it holy and commands us to remember it "by keeping it holy." Exodus 20:8. The Sabbath is a token of God's love to us. Sabbath keeping is a declaration of our faith in Scripture as the inspired Word of God, a memorial of creation and redemption, and a sign of our devotion and commitment to the Creator-Saviour.■