

## Saturday X Sunday

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Where does the idea of a seven-day week come from? It comes from the Sovereign Creator: “On the seventh day God ended His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work that God created and made” (Genesis 2:2-3). Some 4000 years later, the Sovereign Creator, walking this earth in the body of Jesus, said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The Creator himself explained that He established a week of seven days, with one day of rest, with a view to the well-being of man.

However, there is no mention in the Bible of anyone keeping the Sabbath before the Law of Moses. In the only canonical book written before Moses, Job, it does not appear. Job was so righteous that God cast him in Satan's face; it appears from there that keeping the Sabbath was not part of God's righteousness at that time. The march from Elim to Sin (about 35 km, in the desert) took place on a Sabbath (Exodus 16:1-22). The following Sabbath was the first one to be observed (Exodus 16:23-30). See also Nehemiah 9:13-14.

The Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel, and the observance of it was binding on them; it was never imposed on the Gentiles (but of course any individual among them could observe it). The matter is detailed in Exodus 31:12-17, but here is verse 17: “It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.” See also Ezekiel 20:10-12. God linked the Sabbath with the Creation week; it is a remembrance and acknowledgment of the creation of this world, and is to be perpetual.

The Law itself, including the tablets, was a covenant between God and Israel. “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be a special treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine” (Exodus 19:5). “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:2). This verse is part of the decalogue, the tablets, and the commandments themselves are in the second person singular, “Thou shalt not have, thou shalt not do, etc.”. And the Law was accepted by the people (Exodus 24:3). It follows that the Law had nothing to do with the Gentiles, at least directly and at first (but naturally any individual among them could observe it).

So much for the old one, but Jeremiah 31:31-33 speaks of a new covenant, written on hearts, not on tablets of stone. “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD,

when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; my covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Here this new covenant is stated to be for the nation of Israel, but nothing is said about the foundation for this covenant.

I understand that the Sovereign Jesus declared that foundation in Matthew 26:28 (also Mark 14:24 and Luke 22:20). There in the upper room, that last night, Jesus took the cup and said, “This is my blood, that of the new covenant, that which is being shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins”. The Text has the definite article with 'new covenant' = **the** new covenant, which must be a reference to Jeremiah 31. But the saving value of the shed blood of the Lamb of God is not limited to Israel; “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Hebrews chapters 7 to 10 deal with the difference between the two covenants, the old and the new. The new revolves around the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and it is on these that the Church is founded. He is the Mediator of the new (8:6). The old was annulled, as being weak and useless (7:18). The new came after the Law (7:28), which means that the old was left behind. The change was necessary (7:12). The son “removes the first in order to establish the second” (10:9). Hebrews 8:8-12 repeats Jeremiah 31:31-34, and verse 13 explains: “By saying ‘new’ He has made the first one ‘old’; and what is obsolete and aging is near the end”.

In Mark 2:27-28 Jesus, Lord/Owner of the Sabbath, said: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”. As Owner, Jesus could change the rules in this regard, or even annul them. In Romans 6:14 Paul states that we are not under law but under grace. Actually, there are several texts that lead to the understanding that the Owner of the Sabbath did actually abolish it, at least with regard to the Church — Acts 15:24-29; Galatians 2:11-19; 3:10-13 and 24-25; 4:24-5:1; 5:18; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14 and the texts already quoted in Hebrews.

Jesus did not mention the Sabbath in the Upper Room, nor in the appearances after His resurrection. Indeed, **it does not appear in any command given by Jesus to His disciples**. In John 15:10 He said, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love". It follows that we can remain in the love of Christ without keeping the Sabbath, for it is not among those commandments.

An appeal to Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever", or James 1:17: "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning", does not work, because such texts have to do with His character, not with the way of administering the world. Obvious. The situation after the fall of man was very different from what it was before; after the flood than before; after the Law of Moses than before; after Christ's victory than before. Nobody in the OT was saved by trusting in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ: if God has already changed the specific requirements for a person to be saved, then why can't He change a lesser detail like the day of rest?

God's moral character does not change. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:5 and Revelation 21:8 we find lists of the types of people who will not enter the Kingdom of God. There are sins related to each of the ten commandments, except for the fourth, keeping the Sabbath. It follows that keeping the Sabbath is no longer a condition for entering the Kingdom, precisely because it is not a moral issue (at least so it seems to me).

Nothing that has already been said alters the fact that the Sovereign Creator established a week of seven days, with one day of rest, and He did this with a view to the welfare of man. Even though keeping the Sabbath is no longer mandatory, we can still use that day for our rest, as well as some other day of the week. It is well known that Christian churches usually use Sunday. Why do they do this? In Revelation 1:10 John refers to Sunday as 'the Lord's day'. That is because Jesus arose on a Sunday. In Exodus 31:12-17 God linked the Sabbath with the Creation week; it was a remembrance and acknowledgment of the creation of this world. But Jesus Christ's victory on the cross and with His resurrection represents a new creation, or at least the redemption of the first. It was natural and appropriate for Christians to choose Sunday as their day of rest.

In addition to the risen Lord Jesus appearing to the assembled Apostles on Sunday at least twice (John 20:19 and 26), Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 point to a routine use of Sunday by Christians. In fact, after Christ's resurrection there is no mention in the NT of any believer observing the Sabbath as such (Paul went to the synagogues to evangelize).

The Council that took place in Jerusalem, related in Acts 15, dealt precisely with the question of the extent to which Gentile Christians should obey the law of Moses, and the Sabbath was left out; it is not in the list of the four things that were imposed. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit" (verse 28) states that the decision was of divine inspiration, and therefore of divine authority. If the Holy Spirit no longer enforces the Sabbath, who among us has the authority to enforce it?

But the force of the Jewish customs was such that even James, who in Acts 15 correctly heard the Holy Spirit, later succumbed and pressured Paul to do what he should not have done (Acts 21:18-26). From then on it seems that the leadership in Jerusalem lost its importance, and with the destruction of the city it disappeared from sight. Hence, the practices of any Jewish church at the time should not be considered as norms for the Church. Church norms must be drawn from the New Testament.

The Jews observe the Sabbath, and there must be other such observers who also are not trusting in the shed blood of the Lamb of God for the salvation of the soul, and therefore will not go to Heaven. It follows that being a Sabbatarian does not necessarily earn God's good pleasure. Further, when someone develops spiritual pride for being a Sabbatarian, it is because Sabbatarianism has become a stronghold of Satan in his life.<sup>1</sup>

In Colossians 2:16 it is forbidden to judge others on account of the Sabbath; therefore Saturday cannot be the norm. So much so that in Romans 14:5-6 it is said that the choice of the day is at the discretion of each individual: "One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it." Therefore, the day of the week we choose to observe must not be made into doctrine. Christians generally observe Sunday, Jews Saturday, Muslims Friday, but if someone prefers Tuesday, he should be allowed that freedom. But on the other hand, if you want to hold on to a job, you will need to respect local culture; in an Islamic country you may have to observe Friday.

Conclusion: if someone wants to observe the Sabbath, he can; if someone wants to observe Sunday, he can; if someone wants to observe Wednesday, he can; etc. However, according to Hebrews 10:25 we are supposed to meet regularly, and for that purpose there obviously has to be consensus. Since the resurrection of Christ, the general consensus of so-called Christian churches has been to meet on Sundays. It is the Lord's day, which commemorates the new creation, the new covenant (just as the Sabbath commemorated the old creation and covenant).

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<sup>1</sup> When someone is more interested in defending a point of view than in listening to the Word of God, it is quite possible that that point of view is a stronghold of Satan. A person who, in his eagerness to defend a thesis, makes use of stupid arguments, but who thinks he is being very logical, is almost always suffering from spiritual blindness.