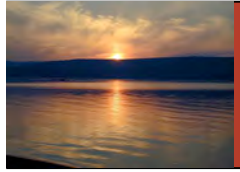




"On What Day Should The Christians Worship?"

A study prepared and delivered by L. M. Ancell in Coffs Harbour, NSW October 2007

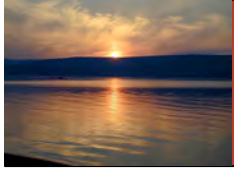


On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

Should Christians set aside Saturday or Sunday as the day in which they get together to worship the Lord?

Four Part Answer:

1. Statements of History (first – second century)
2. Statements of Modern Voices
3. Statements of the biblical text.
4. Statements of refutation



On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

The Evidence From History

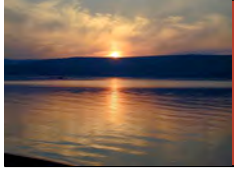
1.

90AD DIDACHE: "Christian Assembly on the Lord's Day":

(Didache: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Chapter XIV)

1. But every Lord's day ye are to gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. 2. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. 3. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations."

Question: What did this first century writer mean by the 'Lord's day'?



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The Evidence From History

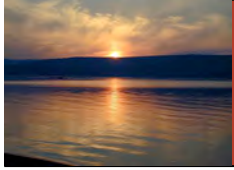
2.

100 AD BARNABAS: (15:8f, The Epistle of Barnabas, 100 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 147

“...Moreover God says to the Jews, 'Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure.' You see how he says, 'The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but the Sabbath which I have made in which, when I have rested ^[heaven: Heb 4] from all things, I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world.' Wherefore we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven...

Note: The term ‘eight day’ was an adaption of the writer here to move himself one step away from the concept of the ‘Sabbath’. It is a euphemistic phrase that means the day after the day of Saturn, or the day after Saternalia. This is our Sunday.

What is helpful is that this is said in 100 ad by a man who just wrote a letter. He is not the same man as found in Acts. Thus this is taken as a statement of common knoweldge and practice by a simple man of the first century, to another man that he is teaching the ways of the church.



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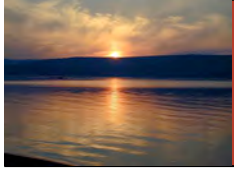
The Evidence From History

3.

.150AD JUSTIN: (First apology of Justin, Weekly Worship of the Christians, Ch 68)

"And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the leader, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration."

...the tradition of the first century continued.



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The Evidence From History

4.

5.

150AD JUSTIN: (First apology of Justin, Weekly Worship of the Christians, Ch 68)

(Dialogue with Trypho 10:1. In verse 3 the Jew Trypho acknowledges that Christians 'do not keep the Sabbath.')

“...There is no other thing for which you blame us, my friends, is there than this? That we do not live according to the Law, nor, are we circumcised in the flesh as your forefathers, nor do we observe the Sabbath as you do...”

↓

...In this famous debate with a Jewish rabbi, Trypho, Justin declares that they do not use the ‘Sabbath’ as their day of collective worship. It was an idea that was followed by the majority of the church 100 latter on in history...

↓

200AD TERTULLIAN: (Tertullian's Apology, Ch 16)

“...We solemnize the day after Saturday in contradistinction to those who call this day their Sabbath...”



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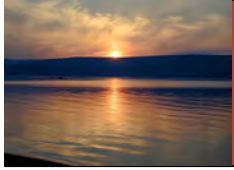
The Evidence From History

6.

.150AD JUSTIN: (Apology, 1, 67:1-3, 7; First Apology, 145 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , Vol. 1, pg. 186)

“...We are always together with one another. And for all the things with which we are supplied we bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ and through his Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or a rural district....(There follows an account of a Christian worship service, which is quoted in VII.2.)We all make our assembly in common on the day of the Sun, since it is the first day, on which God changed the darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturn's day, and on the day after (which is the day of the Sun the appeared to his apostles and taught his disciples these things.

This man, near the end of his life, having begun his Christian walk late in the first century, states that he and his associates worshipped on Sunday as a common practice



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The Evidence From History

7.

.150AD JUSTIN: (Apology, 1, 67:1-3, 7; First Apology, 145 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , Vol. 1, pg. 186)

...he continues...

“...We are always together with one another. And for all the things with which we are supplied we bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ and through his Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or a rural district....(There follows an account of a Christian worship service, which is quoted in VII.2.)We all make our assembly in common on the day of the Sun, since it is the first day, on which God changed the darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturn's day, and on the day after (which is the day of the Sun) He appeared to his apostles and taught his disciples these things.



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The Evidence From History

8.

300AD EUSEBIUS: (Ecc. Hist., Book 1, Ch. 4)

“...They did not, therefore, regard circumcision, nor observe the Sabbath and neither do we; ... because such things as these do not belong to Christians.”

First Conclusion: History says that the first century church worshiped on Sunday and not on Saturday. This is the conviction and declaration of men who lived and wrote as simple Christians from a time and a perspective that was before the formal existence of the Catholic Church.

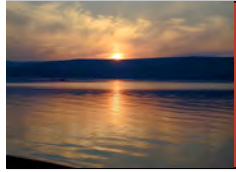


On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

The Evidence From Modern Voices

1.

ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA: Sunday, first day of the week; in Christianity, the Lord's Day, the weekly memorial of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. The practice of Christians gathering together for worship on Sunday dates back to apostolic times, but details of the actual development of the custom are not clear. Before the end of the 1st Century AD, the author of Revelation gave the first day its name of the "Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). Saint Justin Martyr (c. 100-c. 165), philosopher and defender of the Christian faith, in his writings described the Christians gathered together for worship on the Lord's Day: the gospels or the Old Testament was read, the presiding minister preached a sermon, and the group prayed together and celebrated the Lord's Supper. The emperor Constantine (d. 337), a convert to Christianity, introduced the first civil legislation concerning Sunday in 321, when he decreed that all work should cease on Sunday, except that farmers could work if necessary. This law, aimed at providing time for worship, was followed later in the same century and in subsequent centuries by further restrictions on Sunday activities. (15th edition, vol. 11, pg. 392)

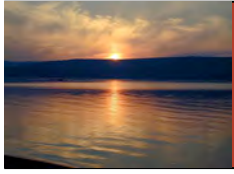


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2.

ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA: From the apostolic era to the present it has been customary for Christians to assemble for communal Sunday services... Civil laws requiring the observance of Sunday date back at least to Emperor Constantine the Great, who designated Sunday as a legal day of rest and worship in 321. This law, however was not specifically Christian, since Sunday was the day of the sun-god for pagans as well as the Lord's day for Christians. While Constantine thus managed to please the two major religious groups in the Roman empire, numerous later law regulating behavior on Sunday have been avowedly Christian. (Sunday, 1988, pg. 21)

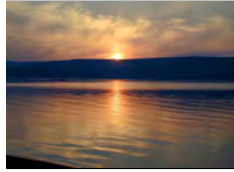


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The Evidence From Modern Voices

3.

COLLIER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA: The New Testament contains clear evidence that from a very early period the first day of the week was observed by Christians as a day of assembly for "the breaking of bread" and perhaps for the collection of freewill offerings. (Acts xx:7 and 1 Corinth xvi:2). Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century describes how "on the day called Sunday" all town and country Christians assembled for instructions in holy writings, for prayer distribution of bread and wine, and the collection of alms. Tertullian declared that the Christians "made Sunday a day of joy, but for other reasons that to adore the sun which was not part of their religion. (Sunday, , 1985, pg. 632-633)



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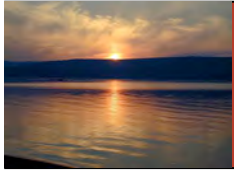
The Evidence From Modern Voices

4.

5.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: The celebration of the Lord's Day in memory of the resurrection of Christ dates undoubtedly from the apostolic age. Nothing short of apostolic precedent can account for the universal religious observance in the churches of the second century. There is no dissenting voice. This custom is confirmed by the testimonies of the earliest post-apostolic writers, as Barnabas, Ignatius, and Justin Martyr. (Philip Schaff, , vol. 1, pg. 201-202)

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: Hence, the first day was already in the apostolic age honorably designated as "the Lord's Day." ...it appears, therefore, from the New Testament itself, that Sunday was observed as a day of worship, and in special commemoration of the Resurrection, whereby the work of redemption was finished. The universal and uncontradicted Sunday observance in the second century can only be explained by the fact that it has its roots in apostolic practice. (Philip Schaff, , vol. 1, pg. 478-479)



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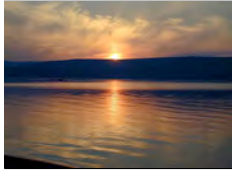
The Evidence From Modern Voices

6.

NEW SCHAFF HERZOG ENCYCLOPEDIA: The earliest traces of the observance of the first day of the week in remembrance of Christ's resurrection is found in the Pauline period of the Apostolic Age... Sunday was first regulated by civil authority in 321, under Constantine, directing that the day be hallowed and observed appropriately. (Sunday, pg. 145)

Second Conclusion: Fact - In 321ad, there was a legalization of the Sunday worship protocol by the prevailing political authority. Common practice had become law.

However, this was an accommodation of what had been going on since the first century in the ecclesiastical services. It is not a new invention, but rather a political move to grant to part of the Roman society a degree of social acceptance and to promote renewed interest in the Pax Romana, the highest call for social structure in the Roman world.



On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

The Evidence From The Biblical Text

1.

23 reasons why the first day of the week, Sunday is important to Christians.

- Jesus rose on the first day of the week not the Sabbath: **Mk 16:9**
- All 6 appearances of Jesus happen on two Sundays, none on Sabbath. **Mk 16:9; Mt 28:5-9; Lk 24:34; Lk 24:13-15; Lk 24:33,36 + Jn 20:19; Jn 20:26**
- Christians are recorded assembling three times on Sunday after resurrection and before ascension, never on the Sabbath. **Jn 20:19 Jn 20:26 Acts 2:1** (*These are the early startings point of Sunday gatherings*)
- The only time Christians are recorded to have assembled together was on a Sunday in **Acts 20:7**, never does it say the disciples assembled on the Sabbath.
- The only day ever mentioned when Christians broke bread was on Sunday: **Acts 20:7**
- Christians are commanded every Sunday to give into a common treasury of the church: **1 Cor 16:1-2**
- Jesus was declared the Son of God on Sunday: **Rom 1:4**
- Ps 2:7 "Today I have begotten thee" was fulfilled on Sunday when he rose: **Acts 13:33**
- The sign that Jesus was glorified was given on Sunday: **Jn 7:39 + Acts 2:1,32**
- The church officially began on Pentecost Sunday: **Acts 2:1**
- Jesus was crowned king on a Sunday: **Acts 2:33-36**
- The sign that Jesus was glorified was given on Sunday: **Jn 7:39 + Acts 2:1,32**
- The church officially began on Pentecost Sunday: **Acts 2:1**
- The disciples reception of the promise of the Father on Sunday: **Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4**
- The Holy Spirit first fell upon the apostles on a Sunday: **Acts 2:1-4**
- Salvation first preached by Peter on Sunday: **Mt 16:19; Acts 2:1,38,40-41**
- The Keys to the Kingdom of God were first used on Sunday: **Mt 16:19**
- The great "Triumphal entry" (also called "Palm Sunday") happened on the first day: **Luke 13:32**
- The time between the Lord's resurrection (sheaf waving day) and Pentecost was Sunday to Sunday counting of 50 days. The starting and stopping time was on the 1st day.
- First time Jesus worshiped after resurrection was on the first day by Thomas (**Jn. 20:26**).
- The first time we could be born again to a living hope was on a Sunday: **1 Pet. 1:3**
- The first time Jesus had communion after his resurrection with His disciples, was on a Sunday: (**Lk. 24:1, 13, 28-35**)
- Pentecost was a Sunday - Sunday duration of 50 days. The starting point and stopping point of counting the 50 days was a Sunday - Sunday time slot!



On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

The Evidence Of Refutation

1.

Did Rome do it?

If Rome changed the Sabbath to Sunday, it would only explain why Protestants and Roman Catholics worship on Sunday. It would not explain why Orthodox Christians worship on Sunday, and it certainly would not explain why Syriac, the Armenian, and Coptic Christians worship on Sunday, because they had very little contact with Rome until modern times. For example, the Armenian Apostolic Church does not celebrate Christmas, which originated in Rome in the fourth century. Instead, they celebrate the nativity of Jesus Christ on Epiphany. Rome could only have changed the day of worship before the fall of the Roman Empire, because after then communications weren't good enough. However, during that period, Rome did not have much influence in the east.



On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

The Evidence Of Refutation

2.

Did the Emperor Constantine do it?

Constantine converted to Christianity after winning the battle of the Milvian Bridge. He wasn't a very bright man and he did not have a coherent personal theology. After he became emperor, he reformed the tax system, passed laws protecting widows and orphans, donated money to churches, and sent his mother Helen to the Holy Land to preserve and restore all those sites that tourists visit even today. He passed a law that made all religions legal, and that ended the persecution of Christians. He convened and paid for the first ecumenical council in AD 325, but he was unable to understand the debates, let alone participate in them. He also changed the Roman week from ten days to seven days, so that Sunday, the Christian day of worship would always be a holiday. He did not make Christianity the state religion or do any of the other evil things often attributed to him—they were actually done by his successor, Theodosius, eighty years later. When Constantine instituted the seven-day week, he did it because Christians were already worshiping on Sunday and his purpose was to make it easier for them.

150AD JUSTIN: "He then speaks of those Gentiles, namely us, who in every place offer sacrifices to Him, i.e., the bread of the Eucharist, and also the cup of the Eucharist, affirming both that we glorify His name, and that you profane [it]. The command of circumcision, again, bidding [them] always circumcise the children on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision, by which we are circumcised from deceit and iniquity through Him who rose from the dead on the first day after the Sabbath, [namely through] our Lord Jesus Christ. For the first day after the Sabbath, remaining the first of all the days, is called, however, the eighth, according to the number of all the days of the cycle, and [yet] remains the first." (Justin, Dialogue 41:4)



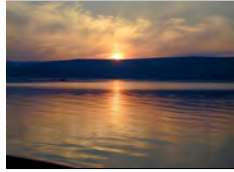
On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

The Evidence Of Refutation

3.

Why did ancient Christians worship on Sunday?

Sunday was the universal day of Christian worship because it is the day of the Resurrection, the day after the Sabbath. The reason Christians no longer have a custom of worshipping on the Sabbath is because there is no commandment to do so. The practice of attending the synagogue every Sabbath did not originate in the Bible, it originated in the Babylonian Captivity. The Jews in captivity invented the synagogue as an institution to preserve their heritage and their religion in a foreign land and that is when they began the custom of attending the synagogue on the Sabbath. In the first century, Christians, both Jews and gentile “God-fearers,” continued to attend synagogue services on the Sabbath and then attended Christian worship on Sunday. Since the Roman week was ten days long at the time, Sunday didn’t always fall on the Roman weekend, so services were held before sunrise. In the 90s, the rabbis excommunicated the Christians and inserted wording into the synagogue liturgy that would make Christians very uncomfortable, even if they did attend. So we were left with just Sunday.



On What Day Should The Christians Worship?

The Evidence Of Refutation

4.

When did Christians start worshipping on the 'Sabbath'?

The first historical record of methodical Sabbath Keeping by Christians who stopped worshipping on the first day of the week, was two active Anabaptist leaders, Andreas Fisher and Oswald Glait. They became the pioneer and promoters of the Sabbath in 1527 AD. Both were former priests who had sacrificed the priesthood to become first Lutherans, and then Anabaptists.