



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #17: "Sabbath Questions"

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

How the Sabbath was changed to Sunday

"There is scarcely anything which strikes the mind of the careful student of ancient ecclesiastical history with greater surprise than the comparatively early period at which many of the corruptions of Christianity, which are embodied in the Roman system, took their rise; yet it is not to be supposed that when the first originators of many of these unscriptural notions and practices planted those germs of corruption, they anticipated or even imagined they would ever grow into such a vast and hideous system of superstition and error as is that of popery." *John Dowling, History of Romanism, 13th Edition, p. 65.*

"It would be an error to attribute ['the sanctification of Sunday'] to a definite decision of the Apostles. There is no such decision mentioned the Apostolic documents [that is, the New Testament]." *Antoine Villien, A History of the Commandments of the Church, 1915, p. 23.*

"It must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day." McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature, Vol. 9, p. 196.*

"Rites and ceremonies, of which neither Paul nor Peter ever heard, crept silently into use, and then claimed the rank of divine institutions. [Church] officers for whom the primitive disciples could have found no place, and titles which to them would have been altogether unintelligible, began to challenge attention, and to be named apostolic." *William D. Killen, The Ancient Church, p. xvi.*

"Until well into the second century [a hundred years after Christ] we do not find the slightest indication in our sources that Christians marked Sunday by any kind of abstention from work." *W Rordor; Sunday, p. 157.*

"The ancient Sabbath did remain and was observed. . by the Christians of the Eastern Church [in the area near Palestine] above three hundred years after our Saviour's death." *A Learned Treatise of the Sabbath, p. 77.*

"Modern Christians who talk of keeping Sunday as a 'holy' day, as in the still extant 'Blue Laws,' of colonial America, should know that as a 'holy' day of rest and cessation from labor and amusements Sunday was unknown to Jesus. . It formed no tenant [teaching] of the primitive Church and became 'sacred' only in the course of time. Outside the church its observance was legalized for the Roman Empire through a series of decrees starting with the famous one of Constantine in 321, an edict due to his political and social ideas." *W W Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, 1946, p. 257.*

"The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals was always only a human ordinance, and it was far from the intentions of the apostles to establish a Divine command in this respect, far from them, and from

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the early apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday." *Augustus Neander, The History of the Christian Religion and Church, 1843, p. 186.*

"The [Catholic] Church took the pagan buckler of faith against the heathen. She took the pagan Roman Pantheon [the Roman], temple to all the gods, and made it sacred to all the martyrs; so it stands to this day. She took the pagan Sunday and made it the Christian Sunday. . The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom. Balder the beautiful: the White God, the old Scandinavians called him. The sun has worshipers at this very hour in Persia and other lands. . Hence the Church would seem to have said, 'Keep that old pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.' And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus. The sun is a fitting emblem of Jesus. The Fathers often compared Jesus to the sun; as they compared Mary to the moon." *William L. Gildea, "Paschale Gaudium," in The Catholic World, p. 58, March 1894.*

"The Church made a sacred day of Sunday. . largely because it was the weekly festival of the sun;-for it was a definite Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and give them a Christian significance." *Authur Weigall, The Paganism in Our Christianity, 1928, p. 145.*

"Remains of the struggle [between the religion of Christianity and the religion of Mithraism] are found in two institutions adopted from its rival by Christianity in the fourth century, the two Mithraic sacred days: December 25, 'dies natalis solis' [birthday of the sun], as the birthday of Jesus,-and Sunday, 'the venerable day of the Sun,' as Constantine called it in his edict of 321." *Walter Woodburn Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, p. 60.*

"It is not strange that Sunday is almost universally observed when the Sacred Writings do not endorse it? Satan, the great counterfeiter, worked through the 'mystery of iniquity' to introduce a counterfeit Sabbath to take the place of the true Sabbath. Sunday stands side by side with Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy (or Maundy) Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Whitsunday, Corpus Christi, Assumption Day, All Soul's Day, Christmas Day, and a host of other ecclesiastical feast days too numerous to mention. This array of Roman Catholic feasts and fast days are all man made. None of them bears the divine credentials of the Author of the Inspired Word." *M. E. Walsh.*

"Sun worship was the earliest *idolatry*." *Fausset Bible Dictionary, p. 666.* "Sun worship was "one of the oldest components of the Roman religion." *Gaston H. Halsberge, The Cult of Sol-Invictus, 1972, p. 26.*

" 'Babylon, the mother of harlots,' derived much of her teaching from pagan Rome and thence from Babylon. Sun worship-that led her to Sunday-keeping, was one of those choice bits of paganism that sprang originally from the heathen lore of ancient Babylon: The solar theology of the 'Chaldeans' had a decisive effect upon the final development of Semitic paganism. . [It led to their] seeing the sun the directing power of the cosmic system. All the Baals were thence forward turned into suns; the sun itself being the mover of the other stars-like it eternal and 'unconquerable' . . Such was the final form reached by the religion of the pagan Semites, and following them, by that of the Romans. . when they raised 'Sol Invictus' [the Invincible Sun] to the rank of supreme divinity in the empire." *Franz F. V. M. Cummont, Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans, p. 55.*

"When Christianity conquered Rome, the ecclesiastical structure of the pagan church, the title and the vestments of the 'pontifex maximus,' the worship to the 'Great Mother' goddess and a multitude of comforting divinities, . . the joy or solemnity of old festivals, and the pageantry of immemorial ceremony, passed like material blood into the new religion,-and captive Rome conquered her conqueror. The reins and skills of government were handed down by a dying empire to a virile papacy." *Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, p. 672.*

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"The power of the Ceasars lived again in the universal dominion of the popes." *H. G. Guinness, Romanism and the Reformation.*

"Like two sacred rivers flowing from paradise, the Bible and divine Tradition contain the Word of God, the precious gems of revealed truth. Though these two divine streams are in themselves, on account of their divine origin, of equal sacredness, and are both full of revealed truths, still, of the two, Tradition [the sayings of popes and councils] is to us more clear and *safe*."-*Di Bruno, Catholic Beliet p. 33.*

"Unquestionably the first law, either ecclesiastical or civil, by which the Sabbatical observance of that day is known to have been ordained, is the edict of Constantine, A.D. 321." *Chamber's Encyclopedia, article, "Sabbath."*

Here is the first Sunday law in history, a legal enactment by Constantine I (reigned 306-337): "On the Venerable Day of the Sun ["Venerable die Solis"-the sacred day of the Sun] let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost given the 7th day of March [A.D. 321], Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them for the second time." *The First Sunday Law of Constantine I, in "Codex Justinianus," lib. 3, tit. 12,3; trans. in Phillip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 380.*

"This [Constantine's Sunday decree of March 321] is the 'parent' Sunday law making it a day of rest and release from labor. For from that time to the present there have been decrees about the observance of Sunday which have profoundly influenced European and American society. When the Church became a part of State under the Christian emperors, Sunday observance was enforced by civil statutes, and later when the Empire was past, the Church in the hands of the papacy enforced it by ecclesiastical and also by civil enactments."-*Walter W Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, 1946, p. 261.*

"Constantine's decree marked the beginning of a long, though intermittent series of imperial decrees in support of Sunday rest." *Vincent J. Kelly, Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations, 1943, p. 29.*

"Constantine labored at this time untiringly to unite the worshipers of the old and the new into one religion. All his laws and contrivances aimed at promoting this amalgamation of means melt together a purified heathenism and a moderated Christianity. . Of all his blending and melting together of Christianity and heathenism, none is more easy to see through than this making of his Sunday law: The Christians worshiped their Christ, the heathen their sun-god [so they should now be combined]." -*H. G. Heggveit, Illustreret Kirkehistorie, 1895, p. 202.*

"If every Sunday is to be observed by Christians on account of the resurrection, then every Sabbath on account of the burial is to be regarded in execration [cursing] of the Jews." *Pope Sylvester, quoted by S. R. E. Humbert, 'Adversus Graecorum Calumnias,' in J. P. Migne, Patrologie, p. 143 [Sylvester (A.D. 314-337) was the pope at the time Constantine I was Emperor].*

"All things whatsoever that were prescribed for the [Bible] Sabbath, we have transferred them to the Lord's day, as being more authoritative and more highly regarded and first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath." *Bishop Eusebius, quoted in J. P. Migne, "Patrologie," p. 23, 1169-1172 [Eusebius of Caesarea was a high-ranking Catholic leader during Constantine's lifetime].*

"As we have already noted, excepting for the Roman and Alexandrian Christians, the majority of Christians were observing the seventh-day Sabbath at least as late as the middle of the fifth century [A.D. 450]. The Roman and Alexandrian Christians were among those converted from heathenism. They began observing Sunday as a merry religious festival in honor of the Lord's resurrection, about the latter

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half of the second century A.D. However, they did not try to teach that the Lord or His apostles commanded it. In fact, no ecclesiastical writer before Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century even suggested that either Christ or His apostles instituted the observance of the first day of the week.

"These Gentile Christians of Rome and Alexandria began calling the first day of the week 'the Lord's day.' This was not difficult for the pagans of the Roman Empire who were steeped in sun worship to accept, because they [the pagans] referred to their sun-god as their 'Lord.' " *E. M. Chalmers, How Sunday Came into the Christian Church, p. 3.*

The following statement was made 100 years after Constantine's Sunday Law was passed: "Although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this." *Socrates Scholasticus, quoted in Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, chap. 22 [written shortly after A.D. 439].*

"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." *Hermias Sozomen, quoted in Ecclesiastical History, vii, 19, in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, p. 390 [written soon after A.D. 415].*

"Down even to the fifth century the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was continued in the Christian church, but with a rigor and solemnity gradually diminishing until it was wholly discontinued." *-Lyman Coleman, Ancient Christianity Exemplified, chap. 26, sec. 2, p. 527.*

"Constantine's [five Sunday Laws] decrees marked the beginning of a long though intermittent series of imperial decrees in support of Sunday rest." *-A History of the Councils of the Church, Vol. 2, p. 316.*

"What began, however, as a pagan ordinance, ended as a Christian regulation; and a long series of imperial decrees, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth, centuries, enjoined with increasing stringency abstinence from labor on *Sunday*." *-Hutton Webster, Rest Days, pp. 122-123, 270.*

Here is the first Sunday Law decree of a Christian council, given about 16 years after Constantine's first Sunday Law of A.D. 321: "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday [in the original: 'sabbato', shall not be idle on the Sabbath], but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out ['anathema,' excommunicated] from *Christ*." *Council of Laodicea, c. A.D. 337, Canon 29, Quoted in C. J. Hefele, A History of the Councils of the Church, Vol. 2, p. 316.*

"The keeping of the Sunday rest arose from the custom of the people and the constitution of the [Catholic] Church. . Tertullian was probably the first to refer to a cessation of affairs on the Sun day; the Council of Laodicea issued the first conciliar legislation for that day; Constantine I issued the first civil legislation." *Priest Vincent J. Kelly, Forbidden Sunday and Feast-Day Occupations, p. 203 [a thesis presented to the Catholic University of America].*

"About 590, Pope Gregory, in a letter to the Roman people, denounced as the prophets of Antichrist those who maintained that work ought not to be done on the seventh *day*." *-James T. Ringgold, The Law of Sunday, p. 267.*

In the later centuries, persecution against believers in the Bible Sabbath intensified until very few were left alive. When the Reformation began, the true Sabbath was almost unknown.

"Now the [Catholic] Church. . instituted, by God's authority, Sunday as the day of worship. The same Church, by the same divine authority, taught the doctrine of Purgatory. . We have, therefore, the same

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authority for Purgatory as we have for Sunday. "-Martin J. Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About*, 1927, p. 236.

"Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change [of the Sabbath to Sunday] was her act. . AND THE ACT IS A MARK of her ecclesiastical power. "-From the office of Cardinal Gibbons, through Chancellor H.F. Thomas, Nov 11, 1895.

Our only safety in these last days is to cling to God and to His holy Word, our precious Bible. We dare not trust our souls to the whims of erring church councils.

When God Rested

"The great Jehovah had laid the foundations of the earth; He had dressed the whole world in the garb of beauty and had filled it with things useful to man; He had created all the wonders of the land and of the sea. In six days the great work of creation had been accomplished. And God 'rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day. and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.' God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All was perfect, worthy of its divine Author, and He rested, not as one weary, but as well pleased with the fruits of His wisdom and goodness and the manifestations of His glory.

"After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man. Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God's great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God's wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.

"In Eden. God set up the memorial of His work of creation. in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign; that they were the work of His hands and the subjects of His authority. Thus the institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind. There was nothing in it shadowy or of restricted application to any people."

Patriarchs and Prophets. 47-48