

*hope; so that they have given up keeping the Sabbath, and now order their lives by the Lord's Day instead - the Day when life first dawned for us, thanks to Him (Jesus) and His death.* [Epistle to the Magnesians 9]

This passage indicates that early Christian converts from Judaism began to observe the Lord's Day in honor of Christ's Resurrection. From their writings it is clear that Christians already during the first century were observing the Lord's Day on Sunday.

The booklet states that the observance of Sunday was mandated by Emperor Constantine in 321 A.D. (referring indirectly to the Edict of Laodicea). It claims that this mandate was forced upon the people; however, that statement is not exactly true. Perhaps this edict was imposed upon pagan business men who thought everyday should be a working day and perhaps those who thought Christians must observe the entire Law of Moses, including circumcision (Gal. 5:6-12; 6:12-16; 1 Cor. 7:18-19). This Edict only made Sunday a civil holiday. By doing so it secularized a practice that was already observed for centuries by Christians. As shown above, this ancient practice is witnessed by the Bible and in the writings of the Apostles, St. Barnabas (c. 100 A.D.), St. Ignatius (107 A.D.), also St. Justin Martyr (c.150 A.D.) and St. Irenaeus (155-202 A.D.).

God in His wisdom knows that we need to set one day a week special to Him. Otherwise we would become so busy with our daily work that we may forget about Him and lose our Faith. Now the essential point of the Third Commandment is that we set one day a week holy to the Lord. But specifically observing Saturday as this day is only ceremonial. As baptism replaced circumcision (Col 2:11-12) for Christians, so does Sunday replace Saturday. Observance of the Lord's Day is not a "mark of the beast" but the mark of being Christian.

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Pamphlet 272

## **The Sabbath or the Lord's Day?**

Phillip B. Liescheski

*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread,...*  
Acts 20:7

Recently we received an 80-page booklet entitled "What's Behind The New World Order?" It admits to be a collection of excerpts from the book, Will America Survive?, which was originally published 100 years ago under the title, The Great Controversy. This book was written by E.G. White, foundress of the Seventh Day Adventists. It claims that the Catholic Church is behind the New World Order. The booklet claims that this is true, since the Church is the beast of Revelation (Rev 17). It accuses the Church of many evil things and attempts to prove that the Church is the beast by exposing the "marks of the beast." Due to limited space only one charge will be considered here.

According to the booklet, one "mark of the beast" is not observing the Sabbath on Saturday. It is alleged that in the fourth century the Church and Emperor Constantine replaced the Sabbath with the pagan "DAY OF THE SUN", i.e. Sunday. Now it is true that the Old Testament says the "seventh day" but assigning that to Saturday is Hebrew tradition. As Christians, we must consider this in the light of the New Testament and the teachings of Christ. If this is a "mark of the beast", almost all Christian churches today bear the mark too.

It is ironic that Jesus and His disciples were harassed by the Pharisees over the Sabbath (John 5:18). Jesus spoke out against the Pharisee's merciless observance of the Sabbath (Matt 12:1-

8; Luke 13:10-16). Jesus also defended Himself and His disciples on this issue by saying:

*"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; RSV].

and claiming authority over it.

It is true that the Catholic Church through the authority of Christ replaced the Hebrew Sabbath (Saturday) with the Lord's Day (Sunday); however, this occurred very early - well before the time of Emperor Constantine in the fourth century. For Christians two important events happened on Sunday. First, the Resurrection of Christ occurred on Easter Sunday (John 20:1ff). Secondly, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Church on Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2:1ff). Also after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the Apostles twice, each on Sunday (John 20:19 & 26). As a result, Sunday became known as the Lord's Day for Christians.

The booklet claims that there is no evidence in the Bible for the shift to Sunday. However in the fourth century, St. John Chrysostom cited **Acts 20:7** as testimony. According to this verse in the Bible, at least some of the disciples assembled together on Sunday, the first day of the week, to celebrate the Lord's Supper:

*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them...* [Acts 20:7]

It is interesting to note that St. Paul had spent a week with the community in Troas (Acts 20:6), and this is the only reported time that he celebrated the "breaking of bread" with them. Also no remarks are made later in this passage that St. Paul disapproved of their worship on

Sunday. One would expect St. Paul to object to this practice, if it were rooted in paganism.

Already in the Old Testament, God expresses disappointment over the Hebrew Sabbath (Isa. 1:13ff) In the New Testament, St. Paul writes:

*Therefore let no one pass judgement on you in questions of food or drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.* [Col. 2:16-17].

According to these verses, the Hebrew diet, festivals and Sabbaths are no longer obligations for Christians. These were only a foreshadowing of things to come in Christ. The focus now is Christ (2 Cor. 3:7-17). Elsewhere St. Paul told the Corinthians to contribute money to the Church each Sunday (1 Cor 16:1-2). This would be a strange request, if Christians assembled on Saturdays. **Hebrews 4:8** speaks of "another day" because the former Sabbath was not obeyed. If Saturday were truly "craved in stone", then it would be strange to speak of another day. According to **Rev. 1:10**, St. John "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This is the only place in the Bible where the phrase "the Lord's day" occurs. If his vision occurred on Saturday, St. John would have written "the Sabbath" instead of using a new phrase. Even though the disciples may have attended the synagogues on the Sabbath to evangelize (Acts 18:4), there is already a definite transition from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day in the New Testament.

The early Christian writers also bear witness to the observance of the Lord's Day (Sunday) over the Hebrew Sabbath (Saturday). The booklet attempts to discredit the historical writings of Eusebius in the fourth century by claiming collusion with Emperor Constantine; however, we have no need to rely on Eusebius.

We can directly cite the writings of Christians who lived in the first century - centuries before Eusebius or Constantine. Even though these writings do not have the same authority as the Bible, they are still reliable historical sources - preserving the thoughts, beliefs and lifestyle of Christians during the first century. These writings include the **Didache** (a church manual written by the Apostles during the 1st century), the **Epistle of Barnabas** (c. 100 A.D.) and the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch who was martyred in Rome before 110 A.D. Translations of these classic Christian writings can be found at the local public or university library. The following quotes were cited from Early Christian Writings (Penguin Classics, 1987). According to the **Didache**, the Apostles wrote:

*Assemble on the Lord's Day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one.* [The Didache 14:1].

This passage is very similar to **Acts 20:7**. Also note the connection between the breaking of bread and the Eucharist (cf. Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:23ff). St. Barnabas in his epistle devotes a whole chapter on the issue of the Sabbath. He concluded by writing:

*And we too rejoice in celebrating the eighth day; because that was when Jesus rose from the dead...* [Epistle of Barnabas 15].

St. Barnabas in using the phrase "the eighth day" was referring to Sunday. Perhaps the most powerful statement was made by St. Ignatius of Antioch. Before 110 A.D., St. Ignatius wrote to the Magnesians:

*We have seen how former adherents of the ancient customs have since attained to a new*