

Lesson 11 - The Sabbath, Sunday Texts, History of Sabbath Change.

In thinking of a text to introduce our subject, the Psalmist's prayer comes to mind. **Psalms 43:3**, "**O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.**" I hope we will each make this our prayer every day. "Lord, send out your light and truth to lead me!"

One of the biggest questions today is: What is the truth? The Bible gives three primary definitions of truth. One, **Jesus** is the way the truth and the life (**John 14:6**). We're all safe in following Jesus. The second definition is found in John 17:17, the "**Word** is truth." Scripture is a revelation from God. Third, God's "**law** is the truth," (**Psalms 119:142**), because it is a transcript of His character.

As we studied our last lesson, we discovered from Genesis to Revelation the truth about God's holy Sabbath day. Let's look back at the Sabbath in relation to these three areas of "Truth" so we can be assured it's right. In **Matthew 12:8** we read that Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath. We also learned Jesus Himself kept the Sabbath every week (**Luke 4:16**). Before He left, He told His disciples, "Jerusalem will be destroyed." He was looking 40 years into the future and still asked His disciples to pray that they would not have to flee on the Sabbath (**Matthew 24:20**). Also in **John 15:10**, Jesus said He kept His Father's commandments. Jesus is truth, so we are safe in following Him.

Then there is the *Bible*. We read from Genesis to Revelation and found the seventh-day Sabbath, (Saturday), all throughout. In the beginning of the Bible, **Genesis 2:1-3**, and also in **Exodus 16**, we found that God again commanded it to the children of Israel. We studied the New Testament as well and saw Jesus' example, then the disciples example in **Acts 13:14, 42-44** and **Acts 18:4**. Then we

read that even in heaven we will celebrate the Sabbath (**Isaiah 66:22-23**)! So again, if the Bible is the truth, we know for sure that Saturday is the Sabbath. There are over 140 verses in the Bible establishing it.

Then we have God's law and, right in the heart of the *law* we read **Exo 20:8-11**, "**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.**" We know the law is truth, so there we have it!

The real issue in this study is not Saturday Sabbath. The issue is: Are we following the truth? Jesus said if we are not, we worship in vain. **Matthew 15:8-8**, "**This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.** If Jesus said Wednesday, we ought to worship Him on Wednesday. If Sunday, then we ought to worship on Sunday. If Saturday, then we ought to worship on Saturday. We want to worship in Spirit *and* Truth!

Now since many sincere Christians today worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, I think it fair that we look at every text in the New Testament that mentions Sunday, or the first day, to see if we can find anything about it being holy, or sacred, or if there was a change from Saturday to Sunday. There are only eight texts.

1. **John 20:19**, "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." This was after the crucifixion and the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews. Certainly nothing about the first day being sacred.

2. **1 Corinthians 16:1-2**, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Here Paul is writing to the Corinthian people whom he had earlier preached to "every Sabbath day" (**Acts 18:1-4**). He is asking for their help to assist in the needs of the saints in Jerusalem where there was a famine. Here Paul instructs them to "lay by in store" on the first day. That required a lot of work, and Paul obviously had no regard for the first day as being the Sabbath, but rather treated it as a common work day.

3. **Acts 20:7-12**, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man

alive, and were not a little comforted." Here Paul is preaching a farewell, all night meeting on the first day. Notice he preached until *midnight*. In the Bible, a new day begins at sundown. There are four steps in a 24 hour day. 1. Sunset. 2. Midnight. 3. Sunrise. 4. Noon, and back to sunset. So here it was Saturday night, the sun set and it became the first day, Paul preached till midnight, he ate and talked until sunrise and then walked 30 miles with his baggage, caught a ship and went on his way. This simply confirms a Saturday evening service, which extended into Sunday, and Sunday again was a day of common work and travel.

The remaining five texts:

4. Luke 23:56 - 24:1, "And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

5. Mark 16:1-2, "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun."

6. Mark 16:9, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."

7. John 20:1, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre."

8. **Matthew 28:1**, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."

All give the biblical account of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection on the first day. In each text the Bible Sabbath was the day *before* the first day - Sunday.

We have taken an honest look at every text in the New Testament that mentions Sunday or the first day, and we have found there is nothing to indicate Sunday being the Sabbath or a holy day. As we studied in our previous lesson, it was the decrees of man that changed the day of worship. Let me share this quote from *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, by Rev. Peter Geirmann, Second Edition, p. 50:

"Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (336 A.D.) transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."

To understand how and why this happened, it's necessary to get some history. We travel back in time to the first world ruling kingdom of Babylon. In Babylon they worshipped the sun as it gave life and warmth. In their false practice, they used "Sun Day," the first day, as their day of worship. This false worship was practiced by all the succeeding kingdoms, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Sun worship, on the first day, was so deeply entrenched it even influence God's people and they practiced it. Notice **Ezekiel 8:14-16**, "**Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.**" God said it was an abomination to Him.

As pagan Rome continued this sun worship, Papal Rome simply adopted it. Constantine, the emperor, put a Christian emphasis on it. Now it was not celebrated in honor of the sun, but rather in honor of the resurrection of Jesus on Sunday. While papal Rome's emphasis on Jesus' resurrection was commendable, it was also deadly, for it placed a tradition of man ahead of a commandment of God! Jesus spoke of this in **Mark 7:7-9, 13**, "**Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. ... Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.**" And again in **Matthew 15:8-9**, "**This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**" As this change was made, the Papal Church made it a strong point of doctrine and belief. Notice the following quotes.

T. Enright, C.S.S.R., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, Feb. 18, 1844: "I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says. 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' The Catholic Church says: "No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week.' And lo! the entire civilized world bows down in a reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church."

D.B. Ray, *The Papal Controversy*, 1892, p. 179: "From this same Catholic Church you have accepted your Sunday, and that Sunday, as the Lord's day, she has handed down as a tradition; and the entire Protestant world has accepted it as tradition, for you have not one iota of Scripture to establish it. Therefore that which you have accepted as your rule of faith, inadequate as it of course is, as well as your Sunday, you have accepted on the authority of the Roman Catholic Church."

T. Enright, C.S.S.R., in a lecture delivered in 1892: "There is but one church on the face of the earth which has the power, or claims power, to make laws binding on the conscience, binding before God, binding under penalty of hell-fire. For instance, the institution of Sunday. What right has any other church to keep this day? You answer by virtue of the third commandment (the papacy changed the fourth commandment and called it the third), which says, 'Remember the thou keep holy the Sabbath day.' But Sunday is not the Sabbath. Any schoolboy knows that Sunday is the first day of the week. I have repeatedly offered one thousand dollars to anyone who will prove by the Bible alone that Sunday is the day we are bound to keep, and no one has called for the money. It was the holy Catholic Church that changed the day of rest from Saturday, the seventh day, to Sunday, the first day of the week."

One can clearly see now why God says all the world wonders after, and worships the beast (**Revelation 13:3, 8**)! Why do God's people in Revelation stand in contrast? Because they worship Him who made heaven and earth, (**Revelation 14:7**), and they keep the commandments of God. All ten - including the fourth! **Rev 14:12**, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that *keep the commandments of God*, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 22:14,

"Blessed are they that *do his commandments*, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

God is hurt when we choose to follow man rather than lovingly obeying Him. Today God is calling us back to follow the *truth!* Because of this, God inspired one of His great prophets to make a prediction that in the last days there would be a commandment-keeping people that restored this truth. You can be a part fulfilling this prophecy! in **Isaiah 58:12-14**, **"And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."** The "old path" to be restored is the Sabbath, and it is to be a "delight" - the happiest day of the week. The "breach" is in God's law. The fourth commandment needs to be repaired. This is what God said His people will do.

But remember whatever God does, Satan counterfeits. Notice the counterfeit of this prophecy in **Ezekiel 22:26**, **"Her priests have *violated my law*, and have *profaned mine holy things*: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have *hid their eyes from my sabbaths*, and I am profaned among them."**

This side violates God's law, and hides their eyes from the Sabbath. Because of this, there's an obvious breach in the law, and so this side tries to counterfeit the repairing. **Ezekiel 22:28, "And her prophets have daubed them with *untempered mortar*, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when *the LORD hath not spoken*."** Untempered mortar is used. This mortar consists of two things. 1. *Speaking lies*. What is a lie? **1 John 2:3-4, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."** 2. Saying, "Thus saith the Lord when the Lord has not spoken." Today if there is any area in which the world is saying, "Thus saith the Lord and the Lord has not spoken" it's Sunday worship!

I encourage you to choose to be on God's side, and join the millions of others around the world who have found the delight of the seventh-day Sabbath!

Now some may say, "Well, I don't know. For years I've been faithfully keeping Sunday and I didn't realize I was breaking God's law! To those, let's read an encouraging word from **Acts 17:30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."** When you don't know, God just winks. Often people ask, "Are all people who keep Sunday lost? NO! Many have not had the privilege of hearing the truth yet, but when God sends the precious truth we must obey. God never condemns sincere people in darkness. The Bible does condemn those who choose to follow darkness rather than light. **John 3:19-21, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither**

cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth *truth* cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Today God invites you to follow the truth and be a part of that group in Revelation that loves Him and keeps His commandments.

***HISTORY OF THE ATTEMPTED CHANGE OF THE SABBATH TO SUNDAY**

God does not change. His law does not change. God specifies the seventh day, Saturday, as the Sabbath. The Bible gives no indication of any New Testament change in the day of worship. Let us open the pages of history after the Bible was written and discover when the attempt to change God's Sabbath to Sunday was made.

The New Testament is completely silent on any controversy over the Sabbath in the New Testament church. The issue of circumcision nearly split the New Testament church and entire books of the Bible were written over the issue of circumcision. Sabbathkeeping was more deeply rooted in Judaism than circumcision, yet we find not discussion over the Sabbath in Bible times. Likewise, for one hundred years after Christ, there is no discussion of the Sabbath question. However, in the second, third, and fourth centuries, there is considerable discussion over this issue, which would indicate that this would be the time when men attempted to introduce a new day of worship.

Not only Daniel, but also the apostle Paul predicted that there would come a falling away, an apostasy (**2 Thessalonians 2**). The

predicted apostasy arose as changes were made in Christian practices 100-300 years after the early church arose. The change in the Sabbath was only one of the many changes in the practice of the early church that occurred during this time.

Sundaykeeping was introduced into the Christian Church rather innocently, and its first advocates never dreamed that it would take the place of the seventh-day Sabbath of God. Sundaykeeping had its origin in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian in the second century. Hadrian persecuted the Jews in Rome incessantly. In an attempt to separate themselves from the Jews and avoid being persecuted with them, these early Roman Christians began keeping Sunday in addition to the Sabbath. Later, they gave as their reason Christ's resurrection on Sunday. Very gradually this practice of keeping Saturday as the Sabbath, and Sunday in honor of the resurrection, spread to other parts of the Christian world. To accentuate the importance of Sunday in honor of the resurrection, the Roman Church prescribed the keeping of one special Sunday in memory of the resurrection - Easter. Many Christians wished to keep Easter on the same date each year, but Rome insisted that it be on Sunday, and Rome won.

Notice how many early Christians writers refer to the fact that in the third and fourth centuries A.D. both Saturday and Sunday were kept by the church.

"In some places no day is omitted, on which the Communion is not offered; in some (it is offered) only on the Sabbath and the Lord's day (Sunday), and in some only on the Lord's day." Augustine, (died 430 A.D.). *Letter 54 to Januarius*, Ch. 2, in MPL, Vol. 33, Col. 200.

"Keep the Sabbath, and the Lord's day festival; because the former is the memorial of creation, and the latter of the resurrection."

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Bk. 7, Sec. 2, Ch. 23, trans. in ANF, Vol. 7, p. 469.

"Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath day, the Lord's day, let them have leisure to go to church for instruction and piety."

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Bk. 8, Sec. 4, Ch. 33, trans. in ANF, Vol. 7, p. 495.

"There are no public services among them in the day except on Saturday and Sunday, when they meet together at the third hour for the purpose of holy communion." John Cassian, (died around 440 A.D.), ***Institutes III***, Bk. 3, Ch. 2, trans. in NPNF, Second series, Vol. 2, p. 213.

"With what kind of eyes do you see the Lord's Day (Sunday), you who dishonor the Sabbath? Do you not know that these days are sisters?" Gregory of Nyssa, (331-396), ***De Castigatione*** ("On Reproof") in MPG, Vol. 46, Col. 309, Greek.

Thus we see that for several centuries the church kept both Saturday and Sunday. Gradually, however, the Sabbath became less and less important, and Sunday became more and more important. This change in emphasis was particularly noticeable in Rome.

To the early church, the Sabbath was a day of delight, a day that they looked forward to and enjoyed. However, in Rome, the Sabbath was made a fast day, a day of gloom, and Sunday was the day of delight. Thus, individuals came to look forward to Sunday, but to dread the Sabbath. Eventually this paved the way for the

Sabbath to be completely disregarded, and the people were already conditioned to accept Sunday. However, we do notice that other Christian Churches did not immediately follow Rome's example:

"The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which is never observed at Rome, or at Alexandria." Sozomaen, (died 440 A.D.), *Ecclesiastical History VII*, Ch. 19.

Thus, as late as four hundred years after Christ, the historians testify that almost all Christian Churches in the world were still keeping the Sabbath, but at Rome things were different. They had ceased to keep the Sabbath and were now keeping Sunday only.

Evidently there was considerable discussion in the church over this substitution of Sunday for the Sabbath of the Bible. The discussions of many have been recorded and preserved for our benefit today. Notice a few of these:

"On Saturday the Gospels and other portions of the Scripture shall be read aloud." Council of Laodicea (A.D. 343-381), Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of Christian Councils*, Vol. 2, trans, and ed. by H.N. Oxenham, p. 310, Can. 16.

"Although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath (Saturday) of the week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this." Socrates Schutasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. 5, Ch. 22, trans. in NPNF, 2nd series, Vol. 2, p. 132.

"On the Sabbath day we gathered together, not being infected with Judaism, for we do not lay hold of false sabbaths, but we come on the Sabbath to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath."

Athanasius, Homilia de Semente, Sec. 1, in MPG, Vol. 28 Col. 144, Greek.

Thus we see that there was considerable discussion of the Sabbath question during the latter part of the second, third, and fourth centuries. The practice of keeping both Saturday and Sunday started at Rome. The practice of downgrading the Sabbath and uplifting Sunday also began in Rome. As Rome spread and began to exercise jurisdiction over other churches, Sunday worship spread with it. When the Roman Church attempted to take over the Celtic Church around A.D. 600, one of the issues over which the two churches differed, (and one of the issues used by the Celtic Church in England to refuse to submit to Rome), was the Sabbath issue.

Notice what the historian says:

"The Celts permitted their priests to marry, the Romans forbade it. The Celts held their own councils and enacted their own laws, independent of Rome. ... The Celts used a Latin Bible unlike the Vulgate, and kept the day Saturday as a day of rest with special religious services on Sunday." Flick, *The Rise of the Medieval Church*, p. 237.

Sabbathkeeping was so deeply rooted in the early New Testament church, that in spite of the attempts of the Roman Church to suppress it and exalt Sunday in its stead, true Sabbathkeeping remained in the church for over 600 years after the Roman Church attained full control of Christendom during the Middle Ages that the Sabbath was lost sight of.

Years later, as the Roman Church looked back on these centuries when she had gradually changed the Sabbath to Sunday, she boldly declared that this was her act. She also proudly claimed that she had power to ordain feasts and festivals because all other churches eventually went along with Rome in the change of the Sabbath. Protestants today still submit to this law of the Roman Church to honor Sunday. Notice these claims:

"Q. What is the Third Commandment?

A. The Third Commandment is: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.

Peter Geiermann, *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, p. 50.

"Q. How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holy days?

A. By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church." Henry Tuberville, *An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrines*, 1833, p. 58.

It is hard to believe that the once pure Christian Church could so apostatize from the truth, even in six hundred years. But here is a solemn warning for us all. Apostasy does not occur overnight. It occurs gradually and begins when one small principle is sacrificed. Once one principle is sacrificed, it is always easier to sacrifice another. And so the process goes, until apostasy has gone deep.

At the beginning of the second century, the church was still pure, But by the end of the second century, just one hundred years later, it was hardly recognizable as the same church. During the second century, the seed was sown for most of the unbiblical teachings that sprang up in the centuries that followed. The seed of Sundaykeeping was one of those teachings that arose in the second century rather innocently, as we have seen, but fully mushroomed into a great departure from Bible truth in the centuries that followed. What was it that paved the way for the apostasy on the Sabbath?

The first reasons for the acceptance of Sunday was a strong anti-Jewish feeling that permeated the church in the early centuries. The Christian Church was attempting to do everything possible to be completely separate from the Jews, especially after the persecution of Hadrian began in A.D. 121-124. thus any institution that was kept by both Jews and Christians became a target for change. Sundaykeeping may possibly have started simply as an attempt to show that Christians not only honored the Sabbath, but also had another day that was kept in addition to the Sabbath. In this way, they would be different from the Jews. In order to emphasize their hatred toward the Jews, doctrinal changes began, as we have seen, in Rome.

Anti-Jewish writers, such as Barnabas and Justin Martyr, first wrote against the Sabbath. Their arguments were that Christians should not keep the Sabbath, because the Sabbath was Jewish, and if they kept the Sabbath, they would be considered Jews. Then in the fourth century, the following decision was made:

"Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ." Oh. Y. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

Here it is noticed that one of the reasons why they were advocating Sundaykeeping was because the Sabbath was Jewish. But at the same time, notice that there was an admission that Christians were idle on Saturday. In other words there were many Christians who were still keeping the Sabbath at this time, and the church at Rome was attempting to legislate a change.

Another influence that resulted in the acceptance of Sunday, was the spread of Gnosticism and Platonic philosophy. These were pagan philosophies that were attempting to gain control over the Christian Church in the early centuries.

The Gnostic day of worship was Sunday, the day consecrated to the sun, which was their god. Many of the early Christian writers, who supported Sunday, were influenced by Gnostic and Platonic philosophies. In fact, Gnostic and especially Platonic influence on Christian thinking, was greater in Alexandria and Rome. Thus here was further support for Sunday.

Another influence in the early Christian Church was Mithraism - an ancient Oriental cult of the sun. This cult came to Rome in the first century A.D. and became popular in the second and third centuries. The central feature of this cult was the worship of the sun upon the first day of the week. Historians have written concerning the influence of Mithraism on Christianity in this way:

"Aurelian ... created a new cult of the 'Invincible Sun.' Worshipped in a splendid temple, served by pontiffs who were raised to the level of the ancient pontiffs of Rome. ... On establishing this new state cult, Aurelian in reality proclaimed the dethronement of the old Roman idolatry and the accession of Semitic Sun-Worship." Franz Cumont, *Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans*, p. 55, 56.

"The two opposed creeds (Christianity and Mithraism) moved in the same intellectual and moral sphere, and one could actually pass from one to the other without shock or interruption." *Cumont*, p. 210.

"The worshippers (of Mithra) held Sunday sacred and celebrated the birth of the Sun on the 25th of December." Franz Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, trans. by Thomas J. McCormack, p. 191.

"Our observance of Sunday as the Lord's day is apparently derived from Mithraism. The argument that has sometimes been used against this claim, namely, that Sunday was chosen because of the resurrection on that day, is not well supported." Gordon J. Laing, *Survivals of Roman Religion*, p. 148.

"As a solar festival, Sunday was the sacred day of Mithra; and it is interesting to notice that since Mithra was addressed as Dominus, 'Lord,' Sunday must have been the 'Lord's Day' long before the Christian times." A. Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity*, p. 145.

While Constantine was converted to Christianity at the beginning of the fourth century, he attempted to unite his empire in the Christian faith. Since many of his subjects were pagans, and had been

accustomed to pagan practices and pagan days of worship such as Sunday, it is only reasonable that Constantine would use his influence to make it easier for these pagans to become Christians. This he gave official sanction to Sunday and encouraged the practice of the Roman Church in keeping Sunday by passing the first legal Sunday law, stating that all should rest on the venerable day of the sun.

"On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in the cities rest, and let all workshops be closed."

Constantine, March 7, 321. Codex Justinianus lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 380, note 1.

Thus we see that as the early church apostatized from the truth, they introduced the day of the sun in place of the Lord's Sabbath. This was a gradual change, innocent in its beginnings, but devastating in its final results. The way was paved for its acceptance because of the anti-Jewish feeling, the Gnostic and Platonic thinking that influenced Roman Christianity, and the influence of pagan Mithraism and its observance of Sunday. With the Christians and pagans keeping the same day, it was much easier for the pagans to come to the church. Rather than be converted, they brought their paganism with them, and Christianity was thus corrupted.

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