

# Origins of Sunday Worship

Now on the first *day* of the week  
Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early,  
While it was still dark,  
And saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb.  
*John 20:1*

**I**f someone were to tell you they were a Christian, you would probably automatically understand that their day of worship was Sunday, the first day of the week. If you would ask them what was the relationship of Christianity to Judaism, they would probably tell you that Christianity came out of Judaism. They might offer the information that Jews and Christians worship the same God, the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

Yet the Jewish religion observes the *Sabbath* or seventh day (Saturday) as their day of rest and worship. Why is there a discrepancy, in this matter, between these two great religions, both of which claim to worship the same God and who hold the majority of their *Scriptures* (the Old Testament) in common?

## ~ Why Sunday? ~

If you ask a Christian why they worship on Sunday, they will probably tell you it is because Christ was resurrected on that day and, therefore, the *Sabbath* day has been changed to Sunday. They might also add that Jesus (*Y'shua*) taught:

**"For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."** (Matt. 12:8)

Therefore, they might say, He had the authority to change the *Sabbath* from the seventh day to Sunday. But did He really have that authority?

**"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works."** (John 14:10)

**"I and My Father are one."** (John 10:30)

So, did the Father authorize *Y'shua* to change the *Sabbath* to Sunday? That is not possible because Scripture says:

**"For I am the LORD [YHVH], I do not change; . . ."** (Mal. 3:6)

As we will see in this article, the answer to the question of changing *Sabbath* to Sunday is a resounding NO! So, if the *Sabbath* was not changed, then why do over one billion Christians worship on Sunday? How did this practice enter into the Church?

## ~ Sabbath Origins ~

It is clear from *Scripture* that the *Sabbath* day originated at the end of *Creation Week*:

**"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. <sup>3</sup> Then God blessed [*barak*] the seventh day and sanctified [*kadash*] it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." (Gen. 2:1-3)**

Notice that God did something very special concerning the seventh day which He did not do to the other six days -- He sanctified it by resting on that day:

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**Meaning:** 1) to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, be sanctified, be separate 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to be set apart, be consecrated 1a2) to be hallowed, . . .

This sanctification (or setting apart) of the seventh day was confirmed at Mount Sinai when God gave the *Children of Israel* the ten foundational commandments by which they were to live:

**"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD [YHVH] your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor**

**your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD [YHVH] made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD [YHVH] blessed [barak] the Sabbath day and hallowed it [kadash]."** (Ex. 20:8-11)

It is highly instructive that this fourth commandment harkens back to *Creation* for legitimacy. It shows that God did not create the *Sabbath* just for the *Children of Israel* -- He created it for all mankind.

Since God reiterated that the *Sabbath* was made *kadash* (holy), it means that God has set apart the seventh day of each and every week to be a time when His people honor and reverence Him. It is Holy time. This fact is made clear throughout the *Hebrew Scriptures* (OT) -- that the *Sabbath* is the seventh day and it is to be honored above all other days.

### ~ The New Testament *Sabbath* ~

Some might argue that the *Sabbath* is now the first day of the week because the *Eighth Day* signifies a *New Beginning*. However, the coming of *Y'shua* was not a *New Beginning* because it was all part of the original plan:

**"... you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ [Messiah], as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. <sup>20</sup> He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you . . ."** (I Pet. 1:18-20)

Nor will this *New Beginning* take place at the return of *Y'shua* to set up the *Malchut Shamayim* (the Kingdom of God). The real *New Beginning* will not occur until after the *Millennium*, when the *Olam Haba* (the *World to Come*) arrives -- as recorded in *Revelation 21 & 22*. Then the *New Heavens* and *New Earth* will be established:

**"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."** (Rev. 21:1)

### ~ The Resurrection Theory ~

Most Christians today would probably say that the reason the *Sabbath* has been changed to Sunday is because that was the day on which the women found the tomb empty:

**"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn [epiphosko - #2020], Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb."** (Matt. 28:1)

Most people read the word "dawn" and think these two women came to the tomb Sunday morning at sunrise, for that is the common usage of the word "dawn" in English. This, however, is a misunderstanding, for the word translated as "dawn" (*epiphosko*) in Greek means the beginning of something. This word is only used twice in the New Testament. The other occurrence has to do with the burial of *Y'shua*:

**"This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus [Y'shua]. <sup>53</sup> Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. <sup>54</sup> That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near [epiphosko]."** (Luke 23:52-54)

In this passage it would make no sense to translate *epiphosko* as "dawn," (the rising of the sun) for it is clear that it means the beginning of a *Sabbath* day -- which is at dusk the previous evening. The same is true of the passage in Matt. 28:1. The *Darby* translation has it correct:

**"Now late on sabbath, as it was the dusk of the next day after sabbath, came Mary of Magdala and the other Mary to look at the sepulchre."** (Matt. 28:1 DBY)

In other words, the two women set out on their journey just after the sun had set, but before it was completely dark and they found the tomb already empty. The day the tomb was found empty is confirmed in the gospel of John:

**"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb."** (John 20:1 NKJV)

It is clear that both Matthew and John are relating a Saturday evening visit to the tomb by Mary Magdalene -- the time when the new week begins. Matthew also places "the other Mary" with her on this visit. When they arrived there Saturday evening the tomb was already empty -- thus, the resurrection could not have been a Sunday sunrise event. However, just to confuse things, there was also a Sunday morning visit to the tomb which took place after the sun had risen the following morning that involved a number of women (Luke 24:1).

Thus, we see, that at the end of the *Sabbath* day, as the first day of the week was just beginning (and it was becoming dark), Mary Magdalene found the tomb empty. Therefore, we conclude that the resurrection actually took place at the end of the *Sabbath* day, just before the sun went down -- for *Y'shua* Himself said:

**"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."** (Matt. 12:40)

No matter how hard one tries, one cannot get three full days and three full nights from Friday at sunset to Sunday morning at sunrise. Many argue that the Jews count time differently than we do today, and that one full day is counted even if only a small fraction of the day has passed. Therefore they count:

- ◆ The last few minutes of Friday as Day 1.
- ◆ The full 24 hours of Saturday as Day 2.
- ◆ The night portion of Sunday as Day 3.

However, as already established, *Y'shua* was out of the tomb before the dark portion of Sunday had even begun. That reduces this kind of counting down to only two days at best -- a far cry from the three days and three nights *Y'shua* said He would be in the grave -- the "heart of the earth."

Their argument has some validity as far as the manner in which the Jews count time, for their normal method of counting is to include partial days as a full day. However, there is one exception to this practice. The Rabbis admit that when the specific phraseology of "x days" and "x nights" is used, it means that number of full days and full nights. For example, notice what *Scripture* says about the amount of time *Moses* was to be on the mountain:

**"So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights."** (Ex. 24:18)

The fact that this passage means 40 full days and 40 full nights is confirmed in the Rabbi's own writings. Confusion about the counting of the actual number of days *Moses* would be there is said to have led directly to the sin of the golden calf. The following passage is from the *Midrash Says*, by Rabbi Moshe Weissman:

"Before ascending to Heaven to receive the *luchos*, [*the two tablets*] Moshe assured the people. 'I will return in forty days, before noontime.' In the meantime, he appointed his brother Aharon and Miriam's son Chur to be in charge of the Bnai Yisrael.

"Now it was the sixteenth of Tamuz, the last of the forty days, and noon had passed. Where could Moshe be?

"When Moshe did not return by noon, the Bnai Yisrael knew that he could no longer be expected on that day, for both his ascents to the mountain as well as his descents therefrom always took place in the early mornings. According to their calculations, the forty days had already passed since they included in the total the day of Moshe's departure. In reality that day was excluded since it was not a complete twenty-four hour period (because Moshe had still been in the Camp during the night preceding that day). Since Moshe had left on the seventh of Sivan, he should have returned, according to the people's opinion, on the sixteenth of Tamuz. In reality, however, he was due only on the seventeenth of Tamuz." (vol. 2, p. 315)

The *Children of Israel* were counting inclusively -- counting the partial first day of his ascent as day number one when, in reality, it should not have been counted at all. They should have been counting exclusively and have begun their count on the evening following his ascent. Because of this misunderstanding, the people thought Moses was not coming back at all -- that he might have perished on the Mountain:

**"Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" (Ex. 32:1)**

In like manner, *Y'shua* was in the "heart of the earth" three complete days and three complete nights. If He was resurrected at the end of the *Sabbath* day (as we understand), then He would have been placed in the tomb at the end of the fourth day or Wednesday evening just before sunset.

Some will argue that *Scripture* says *Y'shua* was placed in the tomb on the *Preparation Day* -- which is always on a Friday, therefore He must have been crucified on Friday. However, there were two *Preparation Days* that week because it was the week during which the *Days of Unleavened Bread* began. There was a *High Day* or *Holyday* on Thursday of that week (the *First Day of Unleavened Bread*). The *Passover Sacrifice Day* (*Nisan 14*) would have been the great *Preparation Day*, the day on which the *Passover Lambs* were offered at the Temple. This was the very day on which *Y'shua* was crucified, for He is our *Passover Lamb*. John makes the dating very clear:

**"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." (John 19:31)**

Thursday (*Nisan 15*) was the *High Sabbath* (when work was not allowed). Friday (*Nisan 16*) was the next work day when the women prepared spices of *Y'shua's* body:

**"That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath [the High Day] drew near. <sup>55</sup> And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. <sup>56</sup> Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath [weekly Sabbath] according to the commandment." (Luke 23:54-56)**

After preparing the spices on the second *Preparation Day*, and resting on the weekly *Sabbath*, the women went to the tomb early on the morning of the first day of the week (Sunday) to anoint the body and, of course, they too found it empty:

**"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared." (Luke 24:1)**

Hence, *Y'shua* was in the tomb three full days and three full nights. just as He said He would be.

~ New Testament References ~

It is clear that *Y'shua* observed the *Sabbath* by going to *Synagogue*:

**"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read." (Luke 4:16)**

Not only did *Y'shua* attend *Synagogue* on the *Sabbath*, He participated in the service when called upon to do so: **"And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:**

**<sup>18</sup> The Spirit of the LORD [YHVH] is upon Me,**

**<sup>19</sup> To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD [YHVH].'**

**<sup>20</sup> Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down." (Luke 4:17-20)**

Years later the Apostle Paul was still consistently teaching in the *Synagogue* on the *Sabbath* day:

**"But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down." (Acts 13:14)**

**"And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks."**

(Acts 18:4)

Even when the Believers were not meeting in the local *Synagogue*, Paul still met with them on the *Sabbath*:

**"And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there." (Acts 16:13)**

It is certainly true that the *Pharisees* accused *Y'shua* of not observing the *Sabbath* properly, but this was a trumped up charge. However, they did not accuse Him of not observing the *Sabbath* at all. Their real accusation was that *Y'shua* was not following their extra-Biblical *Oral Torah* rules. Because of this, the *Pharisees* claimed that He was breaking the *Sabbath*, when, in actual fact, He was showing how God intended the *Sabbath* to be observed from the beginning:

**"And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'" (Mark 2:27-28)**

The *Pharisee's* rule bound method of *Sabbath* observance was, no doubt, part of the "yoke" spoken of by Peter at the *Jerusalem Council* meeting:

**"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10)**

The *Sabbath* was kept by *Y'shua*, by all of His disciples, by the Apostle Paul, and by all of the early Believers, both Jew and Gentile, for over one hundred years after the time of *Y'shua* -- especially in *Judea* and the Eastern Churches. That fact is hardly ever disputed by any reputable Biblical scholar. The move to Sunday worship was a later practice -- it certainly was not the Apostle's practice.

One last *Scripture* that is used to "prove" Sunday worship is found in the *Gospel of Mark*:

**"Now when He rose early on the first day of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons." (Mark 16:9)**

This translation in the NKJV (as in others) makes it sound as though *Y'shua's* resurrection took place on the first day of the week (a Sunday). However, David Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, tells us that verses 9-20:

"... do not appear in the two oldest Greek manuscripts, their style differs from the rest of Mark, and the transition from v. 8 is awkward. Therefore some scholars believe them to be scribal additions." (p. 102)  
Even if this passage was written by Mark, it is better translated as follows (*Holman Christian Standard Bible*):

**"Early [after sunset] on the first day of the week, after He had risen, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had driven seven demons." (Mark 16:9 CSB)**

This indicates that early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, *Y'shua* was already risen, as we have established.

#### ~ The Lord's Day ~

Some others say that the first day of the week is called the "Lord's Day," in the New Testament, and this indicates that it replaces the seventh day *Sabbath*. This too is a falsehood, for as has already been shown, *Y'shua* is Lord of the *Sabbath*, not Lord of Sunday. Some use the following *Scripture* as their "proof text":

**"I [John] was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,...'" (Rev. 1:10-11)**

They say that John saw this vision on a Sunday (the Lord's Day).. However, what it is really saying is that John was present, in vision, during the coming *Day of the Lord* -- that awesome future time period when God will punish the people of the earth for their wickedness:

**"Wail, for the day of the LORD [YHVH] is at hand!  
It will come as destruction from the Almighty." (Isa. 13:6)**

None of these New Testament arguments for a Sunday *Sabbath* stand up under close examination.

#### ~ What Some Theologians Say ~

Many Church theologians have freely admitted that it was the Roman Catholic Church which changed the day of worship from *Sabbath* to Sunday. Here is what Cardinal Gibbons (1834-1921) wrote in his book *Faith of Our Fathers*:

"But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify." (*Roman Catholic and Protestant Confessions about Sunday*, pp. 2-3)

In 1562, the Archbishop of Reggio, at the Council of Trent, unequivocally stated that Church tradition supersedes the *Scriptures*:

"The authority of the Church could therefore not be bound to the authority of the Scriptures, because the Church had changed ... the Sabbath into Sunday, not by the command of Christ, but by its own authority."

In other words, these Catholic theologians believed the Church has the power to change times and laws at their own discretion -- just like the "Little Horn" of *Daniel* and *Revelation*:

**"He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,  
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,  
And shall intend to change times and law." (Dan. 7:25)**

*Y'shua* is still Lord of the *Sabbath* to this very day. It is the Roman Catholic Church which is "lord" of Sunday.

## ~ Early Problems ~

In the early years of the Church, all Believers were Jewish (or Jewish Proselytes) and all *Believers* attended their local Jewish *Synagogue* on the *Sabbath*. That is, if they were still welcome in the local *Synagogue*.

However, things did not always go smoothly for those who believed that *Y'shua* is the promised Messiah. The Jewish *Synagogue* leadership did not accept *Y'shua* as Messiah and they sometimes made life difficult for those who did (both *Messianic Jews* and *Proselyte*). *Scripture* leaves no doubt that persecution, by the non-believing Jews against the *Believers*, did exist in those very early years.

The first record of extreme persecution was the stoning of *Stephen*. He was a member of the initial group of deacons ordained by the *Apostles*:

**"And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, ..."** (Acts 6:5)

Stephen was strong in the faith and was willing to share his faith with other Jews:

**"And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup> Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen."** (Acts 6:8-9)

This group of Jews were not willing to accept *Y'shua* as their Messiah and they disputed with Stephen. However, they were unable to contradict Stephen's teaching -- so they did what people often do when they are confronted by truth and do not want to accept it -- they made up stories and spoke *Lashon Hara* (the evil tongue) against him:

**"And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. <sup>11</sup> Then they secretly induced men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.'**

**<sup>12</sup> And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.**

**<sup>13</sup> They also set up false witnesses who said, 'This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place [the Temple] and the law; <sup>14</sup> for we have heard him say that this Jesus [Y'shua] of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.'**

(Acts 6:10-14)

Stephen lost this battle with the *Council* and was stoned to death for blasphemy. The final straw, for the *Council*, was when Stephen reported to them that he was seeing a vision of *Y'shua*, along with the glory of the Father in Heaven:

**"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus [Y'shua] standing at the right hand of God, <sup>56</sup> and said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'**

**<sup>57</sup> Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; <sup>58</sup> and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus [Y'shua], receive my spirit.'**

**<sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."** (Acts 7:55-60)

## ~ Gentile Conversion ~

It was several years after the death of Stephen before God revealed to Peter that *Gentiles* were to be accepted as equals into the *Believing Community* without going through a full conversion to Judaism (Acts 10 & 15). This opened up a whole new can of worms concerning the interaction of Jews and *Gentiles* in the *Synagogue*. As more *Gentiles* became believers in *Y'shua*, it caused more problems in the *Jewish Synagogues* and resulted in an increase in persecution of all *Believers*, both Jew and *Gentile*, by the non-believing Jews.

It was after the stoning of *Stephen* when *Saul* (later to be renamed *Paul*) began an intense persecution against members of the *Early Ekklesia*. However, *Y'shua* revealed Himself to *Saul* on the road to Damascus and he did a complete turn around and eventually became *Y'shua's Apostle* to the *Gentiles*.

## ~ Enter Sunday ~

One of the leading authorities on the subject of the change of the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday was Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, a *Seventh Day Adventist*. He was the only non-Catholic to ever obtain a doctorate degree from the *Pontifical Gregorian University* located at the Vatican in Rome. His doctoral thesis is published in a book entitled *From Sabbath to Sunday*. Bacchiocchi goes into detail about how the change came about. Much of his research was based upon documents residing in the Vatican library, which are off limits to the general public.

Bacchiocchi found that conditions were especially ripe for trouble in the *Synagogues* in the city of Rome. There a large contingent of *Gentile Believers* began to bring some of their old pagan beliefs into the *Synagogue*, including Sunday worship. They previously had been, for the most part, sun worshipers and Sunday was the primary day on which the sun was worshiped by the pagans.

As a result, *Gentile Believers* began to look askance at the *Jewish Believers* because many of them continued to cling to the old "Jewish" ways. This is evident from chapters 9 through 11 of the book of *Romans*, where Paul showed the *Gentile Believers* how blessed they were to be grafted into the *Olive Tree of Israel* and, therefore, should not despise the *Jewish Believers*:

**"For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>14</sup> if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh [Jews] and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? <sup>16</sup> For if the firstfruit [the Jews] is holy, the lump [the entire Believing Community] is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. <sup>17</sup> And if some of the branches [Jews] were broken off, and you [Gentiles], being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root [of Israel] and fatness of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you."**

(Rom. 11:13-18)

## ~ Conditions in Rome ~

According to historical records, conflict in Rome, between the *Gentile Christians* and the Jewish nonbelievers, became so intense that rioting sometimes took place as a result of their differences. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* states:

"According to Suetonius [*a Roman historian of the 1st and 2nd centuries*], Claudius banished the Jews from Rome, but the details are obscure. Disputes between Jews and members of the Christian sect in Rome had caused disturbances and Claudius apparently either banished certain Jews or prohibited them from assembling, which led to their voluntary departure, sometime between 41 and 50 CE. It is generally accepted that the emperor's aim was the preservation of peace and not an act of hostility toward the Jews." (*CD Rom Version*)

*Scripture* indicates this expulsion of the Jews from Rome was the reason Aquila and Priscilla moved to Corinth: **"After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup> And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them."** (Acts 18:1-2)

The *Christians* in Rome then found themselves in an interesting situation. As long as they were identified as being a Jewish sect they received certain protections under Roman law, for Judaism was a recognized as a legitimate religion in the Roman Empire at that time. Therefore, they were not required to participate in the pagan rituals which were common at that time -- including Emperor worship.

However, there were great disagreements between the *Gentile Believers* and the Jewish leadership in the *Synagogues* of Rome. These disagreements stemmed from a number of sources. First of all, many *Gentiles* thought that since they were accepted into the *Messianic Community* without converting to Judaism, that they were exempt from all the practices and *Torah* teachings of the *Messianic Jews*. Therefore, they reasoned, the Jews had little of value to teach them. Of course that opinion was false and it no doubt contributed to an antinomian (anti-law or anti-*Torah*) attitude among the *Gentile Believers*. The *Gentiles* probably thought that because they had accepted *Y'shua* as the *Messiah*, they did not have to learn the *Torah* instructions of God on how to conduct their daily activities.

These two conditions: hostility between the *Jewish Believers* and the *Gentile Christians*, and the increasing hostility of the Roman government toward the Jews, placed the *Gentile Christians* in a difficult position. Therefore, the *Christians* began to distance themselves from the *Jewish Believers*, despite the fact that they (the *Christians*) were not recognized by Rome as an independent religion. That, of course, put them in direct conflict with the

Roman authorities, especially when they refused to participate in worshipping the Emperor (a requirement for everyone except the Jews).

Into this situation came a new emperor named *Nero*. He ruled from 54-68 CE. At first, *Nero*, unlike *Claudius*, was generally supportive of the Jews in general. However, in 64 CE the city of Rome burned to the ground. *Nero* took that opportunity to rebuild Rome in the Greek style of architecture. His enemies claimed that *Nero* set the fire himself so he could rebuild the city to suit his artistic tastes. However, *Nero* blamed the fire on the *Christians* and thus began a persecution against them, which waxed and waned in Rome for over two hundred and fifty years.

It was during this time period when there came to be a break in Rome (and only in Rome) between the non-believing Jews and the *Christians*.

### ~ The Situation in Judea ~

Meanwhile, in *Judea*, the *Jewish Believers* and the non-believing Jews continued to live together in relative peace. However, this situation also began to deteriorate in 63 CE when *Y'shua's* half-brother, *Ya-acov* (a.k.a. James in English) was martyred in Jerusalem by *Hanan*, the *Sadducean* High Priest. It was not long after this event when the *Zealots* began to gain power in Jerusalem and finally, in 68 CE, war broke out between the Jews of Jerusalem and the Roman government. As the armies of Rome began to gather around Jerusalem the *Believers* there began to leave, fleeing to *Pella*, a city lying eight miles east of the *Jordan River*. Their reason for leaving was based upon what *Y'shua* had told His disciples:

**""But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. <sup>21</sup> Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.""** (Luke 21:20-21)

Needless to say, their action did not ingratiate the *Believers* with the general Jewish population and especially with the *Zealots*.

After the fall of Jerusalem to the armies of *Titus*, and the destruction of the *Temple*, Jews began to return to Jerusalem. Among them were members of the *Jewish Believing Community*. Once again, the non-believing Jews and the *Believing Jews* met together in some *Synagogues*. Along with them would have been *Gentile Believers* as well -- although their number would have been far less proportionally than what was found in Rome.

*Eusebius*, a Christian Church historian of the 4th century, states that the leadership of the *Believing Community*, in *Judea*, were all Jewish. He records that all of these Jerusalem Bishops "were zealous to insist on the literal observance of the Law."

If this were the case -- and we have no reason to doubt it since *Eusebius* himself was a Sunday keeper and would have been pleased to record that the Jewish Bishops were keeping Sunday if it had been true. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the *Jerusalem Church* still kept the *Sabbath* as one of the commands found in the Law even after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

### ~ The Breakup Begins ~

However, in *Judea*, the breakup between the non-believing Jews and the *Believers* (both Jew and Gentile) began to occur soon after the destruction of the Temple. First off, the Rabbis moved their headquarters from Jerusalem to *Yavneh* (today's Joppa, just south of Tel Aviv). There they began a reorganization of the Jewish religion and culture based upon Rabbinic *Halacha* (strict observance of the law). Today's Rabbinic Judaism is a direct descendant of the reform movement that took place in the 1st and 2nd centuries at *Yavneh*.

Meanwhile, the *Sadducean* party dissolved, since it was composed mostly of Priests and Levites. Now that the Temple was gone, so too was their purpose for remaining organized.

However, it was a slow process. While many of the Rabbis did not want the people associating with the Jewish *Believers*, it was difficult to make the separation. Eventually, the Rabbis came up with a plan. They inserted a prayer into the *Shemoneh Esrei* (the *Eighteen Benedictions* recited in the daily prayers) which condemned the "heretics." Included in this category were the *Nazarenes* (who believed that *Y'shua* is the *Messiah*) and that He is going to return again to bring the *Malchut Shamayim* (*Kingdom of Heaven*) to earth. Since *Believers* could not, in good conscience, recite a prayer that condemned faith in *Y'shua*, many of the *Jewish Believers* left the synagogues and began meeting together in their own *Synagogues* or in homes.

However, this is not to say that the *Jewish Believers* in *Judea* gave up the *Sabbath* or the *Torah*, for they did not. In fact, Roman Catholic Church records contain the history of those *Believers* and their descendants down through the centuries. They are the people, referred to in Catholic writings, as "Judaizers." They were always small in number and were often persecuted by the Church, as well as by the non-Believing Jews, and sometimes they had to flee for their lives.



~ *Birkat ha-Minim* ~

The *Shemoneh Esrei* is the core and main element of the daily *Synagogue* service. The term means "The Eighteen Standing Prayers." In its original form it consisted of eighteen prayers which were always recited while standing and facing the Temple Mount.

In the late first century CE, a nineteenth prayer was added which condemned all heretics. This new prayer was placed, in the order, as number twelve and is called *Birkat ha-Minim* (Benediction Concerning Heretics). The modern text of this prayer, as found in *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* by Joseph H. Hertz, is as follows:

"And for slanderers let there be no hope, and let all wickedness perish as in a moment; let all thine enemies be speedily cut off, and the dominion of arrogance do thou uproot and crush; cast down and humble speedily in our days. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who breakest the enemies and humblest the arrogant." (pp. 143-145)

In this modern form, one would not necessarily think that the *Birkat ha-Minim* had anything to do with the *Messianic Believers* in *Y'shua*. In fact, that is the party line as put forth by modern day Judaism. Hertz, in a footnote, makes the following comment:

"This petition is an addition to the 'eighteen benedictions,' which by it became nineteen. It is directed against Jewish sectaries (*Minim*) [*apostates to the Jewish faith*] in the generation after the Destruction of the Second Temple. They wrought division and havoc in the religious camp of Israel. Especially detestable were their fratricidal activities in the political field. They played the informers for the Roman authorities, and brought many of their brethren to a painful death. The wording of this Benediction has undergone manifold modifications. In its present form it has a universal and timeless application. The statement that in this prayer Jews of today utter an imprecation against those of another Faith, is a baseless calumny [*a false and malicious statement*]." (Ibid. p. 142)

However, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* has a little different take on this prayer, placing its origin much earlier:

"Prevailing scholarly opinion, based upon Ecclesiasticus 36.7, holds that this prayer originated during the Syrian-Hellenistic oppression in the time of the Second Temple, and that it was directed against those Jews who collaborated with the enemy. At that time, the Prayer was known as the 'Benediction to Him Who humbles the arrogant.' A century later the imprecation was directed against the Sadducees, and it was designated as 'Benediction concerning the Sadducees.' Under Rabban Gamaliel II (late first century C.E.) this prayer was invoked against the Judeo-Christian and Gnostic sects and other heretics who were called by the general term *min* (plural *minim*). To avoid any suspicion of heresy, the hazzan had to be certain to recite this prayer in public worship. If he omitted it by error, he had to return and recite it, although such a regulation does not apply to any other." (CD Rom Version)

According to one source, the original prayer that was recited after the destruction of the Second Temple was as follows:

"May the apostates have no hope, unless they return to Thy Torah, and may the Nazarenes and the Minim disappear in a moment. May they be erased from the book of life, and not be inscribed with the righteous."

If a *Messianic Jew*, attending *Synagogue* were to recite this prayer, they would, in essence, be asking God to condemn themselves. If they did not recite it, then other worshippers in the *Synagogue* would notice, and they would be discovered to be *Nazarenes* or *Believers* in *Y'shua*. Thus, when this version of the prayer was added it caused the *Messianic Believers* to stop attending that particular *Synagogue* and to go to another where the *Birkat ha-Minim* was not recited or to begin establishing their own places of worship.

~ **Meanwhile Back in Rome** ~

In Rome the *Gentile Believers* gravitated further and further from their Jewish roots. Matters took a turn for the worse during the reign of *Emperor Domitian* (ruled from 81-96 CE). He was adamantly opposed to all so-called 'oriental cults' -- in other words to both Judaism and Christianity. According to *Suetonius*, *Domitian* laid heavy taxes on the Jews and it included "those who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews." In other words, *Believers* who kept the *Sabbath* were labeled as Jews even though the Jews would have nothing to do with them, since they were almost all *Gentiles*. Needles to say, the *Believers* in Rome began to look for a way out.

It was during this time that they began to substitute the pagan holiday of *Easter* in place of the *Passover* of *Scripture*. They falsely reasoned that since the *Scriptures* teach that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, that is when

they should celebrate their holiday. Besides, celebrating *Passover* would make them look like Jews to the Romans and increase their chances of persecution by the Emperor's soldiers.

From *Easter Sunday* observance, it was but a short leap to begin celebrating the resurrection every Sunday. There is no explicit date which can be given for this happening. In all likelihood it occurred slowly over a period of time, with some congregations making the change quickly and other congregations clinging to the old ways of seventh day *Sabbath* observance.

### ~ The Final Parting in Judea ~

It was during the reign of the *Emperor Hadrian* that things came to a head in *Judea* between the non-Believing and *Believing Jews* in the *Synagogues*. *Hadrian* came to power in 117 CE and was initially favorable towards the Jews. However, all of this changed when the Jews again revolted against Roman rule. This time it was under the leadership of a man named *Bar Kosevah*. He led a revolt beginning in 132 CE. One of Judaism's leading Rabbis of the time, Rabbi Akiva, proclaimed that *Bar Kosevah* was the *Messiah* and he renamed him *Bar Kochba* which means "Son of the Star." This name is based upon:

**"A Star [kokahb] shall come out of Jacob;  
A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,  
And batter the brow of Moab,  
And destroy all the sons of tumult." (Num. 24:17)**

After *Bar Kochba's* defeat in 135 CE, he was nicknamed *Bar Kozivah*, which means "Son of the Lie."

Because Rabbi Akiva had proclaimed *Bar Kochba* to be the *Messiah*, the *Believing Jews* (who knew he was a false messiah) refused to join his army and fight for the independence of *Judea*. For this reason, the *Believing Jews* were branded as traitors. This proved to be the final break between the non-believing and *Believing Jews* in *Judea*.

After the revolt, *Hadrian* expressly forbid the observance of the *Shabbat*, the circumcision of children, and the reading of the *Torah*. He totally destroyed Jerusalem and rebuilt the city under the name *Aliea Capitolina*, and Jews were forbidden to even enter the city for a number of years. After 135 CE, all of the Church Bishops of Jerusalem (a.k.a. *Aliea Capitolina*) were *Gentiles* rather than Jews. According to *Eusebius*, one wing of the *Ebionites* (the name of a *Believing* sect in *Judea*) began to observe Sunday as their day of worship so as not to incur the wrath of *Emperor Hadrian*.

### ~ The Early Jerusalem Church ~

As mentioned previously, according to *Eusebius*, up until the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 135 CE, all of the leaders of the Jerusalem "Church" had been *Jewish Believers*. The first one was *Ya'acov* (a.k.a. James), the half-brother of *Y'shua*. The second was *Simeon* the son of *Cleopas*. This *Cleopas* is thought to be the same person who met *Y'shua* on the road to *Emmaus*. *Eusebius* stated that *Cleopas* may have been a brother of *Joseph*:

**"Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?'" (Luke 24:18)**

The true leadership of the *Early Ekklesia* was in Jerusalem and it was Jewish.

Following is a listing of all fifteen Jewish leaders of the early *Messianic Believing Community* in Jerusalem:

1. *Ya'acov*, 2. *Simeon* son of *Cleopas*, 3. *Justus*, 4. *Zaccheus*, 5. *Tobias*, 6. *Benjamin*, 7. *John*, 8. *Matthew*, 9. *Philip*, 10. *Seneca*, 11. *Justus*, 12. *Levi*, 13. *Ephres*, 14. *Joseph*, and 15. *Judas*.

*Eusebius* states that all of these men were of the *Circumcision* (in other words they were Jews). These were the leaders of the early *Ekklesia* (the *Congregations* of *Messianic Believers*) worldwide. They were not in Rome, and they were not *Gentile*.

Nevertheless, the Roman Church eventually took control, especially after 135 CE when Jerusalem was leveled and the Jews were forced to flee. Since Rome was the capitol of the Empire, it stands to reason that the other areas looked to the Bishops of Rome to provide the necessary leadership once the *Ekklesia* in Jerusalem was gone. However, communication was slow in those days, so many congregations in Asia minor continued doing things the way they had been taught by their predecessors -- some of whom had been in direct contact with one or more of the original Apostles.

### ~ The Quartodeciman Controversy ~

It was not long before a controversy developed between the churches of Asia Minor (a.k.a. Eastern Churches) and the leadership in Rome. When Rome adopted *Easter Sunday* as the day to replace the *Passover*, the Eastern

Churches called it into question. In the past, they had kept the *Passover* on *Nisan* 14 (the word *Quartodeciman* means 14th), and the *First Day of Unleavened Bread* on *Nisan* 15 as taught in the *Torah*:

""These are the feasts of the LORD [YHVH], holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.

""<sup>5</sup> "On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight [between the two evenings] is the LORD'S [YHVH's] Passover. <sup>6</sup> And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD [YHVH]; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. <sup>7</sup> On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. <sup>8</sup> But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD [YHVH] for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it."" (Lev. 23:4-8)

The Western Churches, headed by the Church in Rome, did not want to keep the "Jewish" Festivals. They preferred to divorce themselves completely from the Jews in order to avoid persecution -- since the Jews were, at that time, still out of favor with the Roman government. Therefore, they devised the new holiday of *Easter Sunday* as a substitute for the *Passover* of the *Torah*. *Easter* was said to be a celebration of the resurrection of *Y'shua*.

The two principle players in this drama were *Victor*, the Bishop of Rome and *Polycrates*, the head Bishop in Asia. This controversy took place in 190 CE (over 150 years after the death and resurrection of *Y'shua*). During all that time, the *Believing Community* in Asia was keeping *Passover* according to the *Scriptures*. *Eusebius* quotes a letter which *Polycrates* wrote to *Victor*:

"We therefore observe the genuine day; neither adding thereto nor taking therefrom. For in Asia great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again in the day of the Lord's appearing, in which He will come with glory from heaven, and will raise up all the saints; Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who sleeps in Hierapolis, and his two aged virgin daughters. ... Moreover, John, who rested upon the bosom of our Lord; who also was a priest, and bore the sacerdotal plate, both a martyr and a teacher. He is buried in Ephesus; also Polycarp of Smyrna, both bishop and martyr. ... [he goes on to list a number of other people] All these observed the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith." (p. 209)

Notice that *Polycrates* mentions both the Apostle John and *Polycarp* as being buried in Asia. Tradition holds that *Polycarp* was a student of John and that *Polycrates* was, in turn, a student of *Polycarp*. Thus, *Polycrates* was only one generation removed from the Apostle John -- who, above all others mentioned, would have known the manner in which *Believers* should celebrate the Festivals.

However, *Victor* was unmoved by either *Scripture* or Apostolic tradition, for he promptly excommunicated the Churches in Asia who refused to follow his new, made up, holiday which is today called *Easter*. Concerning this matter *Eusebius* wrote:

"Upon this, Victor, the bishop of the church of Rome, forthwith endeavored to cut off the churches of all Asia, together with the neighboring churches, as heterodox [against orthodoxy], from the common unity. And he publishes abroad by letters, and proclaims, that all the brethren there are wholly excommunicated." (p. 209)

Nevertheless, *Victor*, being pressed by *Irenaeus*, Bishop of Lyon, finally accepted the fact that the churches of Asia were not going to celebrate *Easter* on Sunday during his lifetime and so an uneasy peace ensued.

The first Bishop whom *Irenaeus* mentioned as observing the Sunday holiday was *Bishop Sixtus*. If this is true, then it dates the origin of the *Easter Sunday* resurrection observance to the time period of 116-126 CE, when *Sixtus* sat as Bishop in Rome. He likely did this in order to distance the church from the Jews. Whatever the exact date, the bottom line is that fairly early in the 2nd century the Roman Church totally abandoned the *Passover* and substituted a *Resurrection Sunday* holiday in its place.

Eventually, the Roman Church prevailed and the churches bowed to the pagan leadership in Rome, accepting *Easter* in place of *Passover* and Sunday as being the day to celebrate the resurrection.

~ Enter Constantine ~

It was not until 325 CE that the Church of Rome finally gained enough power to force their false holiday on the rest of the known world's churches. This came about because the Roman Emperor, *Constantine*, had become the actual head of the Church. He called a church council meeting to be held at *Nicea* in 325 CE in order to bring conformity to all the churches in the empire.

At the *Council of Nicea* the following proclamation was made:

"All the brethren in the East who formerly celebrated Easter with the Jews, will henceforth keep it at the same time as the Romans, with us and with all those who from ancient times have celebrated the feast at the same time with us."

This decree was issued almost 300 years after *Y'shua* walked the earth.

*Constantine* was originally a sun worshipper and was not baptized as a Christian until he was on his death bed. As a sun worshipper, and not a true Bible believing Christian, *Constantine* wrote the following edict:

"It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. ... Let us have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd: for we have received from our Saviour a different way. ... Strive and pray continually that the purity of your soul may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the customs of these most wicked men. ... All should unite in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, and in avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews."

Once Sunday worship was firmly established, the Church decreed that Saturday should become a day of fasting. This was done to show contempt for the Jews and to make the *Sabbath* a day of affliction rather than a day of joy. In addition, all eucharistic celebrations and religious assemblies were forbidden on the *Sabbath*.

#### ~ Roman Power ~

By this time, the Roman Empire was the most powerful nation on earth. They wielded enough power to cause other churches to abandon the *Scriptures* for Roman tradition. Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, in his book, *From Sabbath to Sunday* makes the following observation:

"... the Church of Rome seems to have emerged to a position of preeminence already in the second century. The Roman Pontiff was in fact the only ecclesiastical authority widely recognized and capable of influencing the greater part of Christendom (even though some churches rejected his instructions) to accept new customs or observances." (p. 211)

Bacchiocchi lists a number of reasons why the Roman Church came to dominate the other churches after the Jerusalem Church was dissolved when the Jews were expelled from that city. Among them were:

- ◆ Because of the anti-Judaic policies of the Roman government -- the Christians at Rome decided to sever their ties with the Jews much earlier than in other areas of the Diaspora.
- ◆ After this severing of relationship with the non-Messianic Jews, the Church at Rome consisted almost entirely of former pagans.
- ◆ With the leadership of the Roman Church entirely in the hands of *Gentiles*, the tendency to ignore or even denigrate the *Hebrew Scriptures*, along with all things Jewish, was extremely great.

The eventual outcome of these trends was to abandon the *Sabbath* day and move to Sunday worship to avoid having the Church look like it was a sect of Judaism. In order to do this, the Church had to devalue the *Sabbath*. This they did by claiming that the *Sabbath* was but a temporary institution given only to the Jews as a sign of their unfaithfulness. They seem to have forgotten the *Creation Week* when God placed a blessing upon the *Sabbath*:

**"Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." (Gen. 2:3)**

In order to show their contempt for the *Sabbath*, Catholics were required to both fast and work on that day. Thus, they made the *Sabbath* day the least desirable of the seven days of the week, rather than the joyful celebration as it was intended.

#### ~ More Sunday Theology ~

It is our opinion that the reason the Catholic Church abandoned *Sabbath* observance, in favor of Sunday worship, was twofold. They were finding themselves in constant disagreement with the non-Messianic Jews over doctrinal issues because the *Gentile Believers* did not want to follow *Torah*. The second is because they wanted to avoid the persecution that the Roman government was bringing upon the Jews because of their rebellions.

As mentioned previously, in the early years after *Y'shua*, it was an advantage for the *Messianic Community* to be looked upon as another Jewish sect because it gave them certain religious freedoms not enjoyed by others. Specifically they were not required to participate in any of the pagan festivities or join in Emperor worship.

Once the Jews fell out of favor with the Roman government, it became apparent, to the *Gentile Messianic Believers*, that they would be better off if they could divorce themselves completely from all aspects of Judaism. One of the most obvious ways was to begin worshipping on a different day. This was especially true in the city of Rome, where the Jews came under close scrutiny earlier than in other parts of the realm.

So, avoiding persecution was the pragmatic reason for the Jews and *Gentile Messianic Believers* to part company in the *Synagogues* of the city of Rome. Because, the decision was made, by the *Gentile Believers*, to separate from the Jews to avoid persecution -- it then became necessary for the *Gentile* leadership to come up with theological reasons for the split. Initially, they did not hit on the idea of a Sunday resurrection as their main excuse. Instead, they used Creation as their theological basis for the change.

Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 CE) presented his primary reason for supporting Sunday worship. In his *1 Apology* 67 he states:

"Sunday, indeed, is the day on which we hold our common assembly because it is the first day on which God, transforming darkness and prime matter, created the world."

It may seem strange that the ancient Church theologians could discount the clear *Scriptural* command to honor the *Sabbath* in favor of Sunday based solely on the Creation week story. Yet in an early Christian text called *Syriac Didascalia* (c. 250 CE) the following statement is made:

"Cease therefore, beloved brethren, you who from among the people have believed, yet desire still to be tied with bonds, and say that the Sabbath is prior to the first day of the week because the Scripture has said: 'In six days did God make all things; and on the seventh day he finished all his works, and He sanctified it.'

"We ask you now, which is first, Alaf or Tau? For that [*day*] which is the greater is that which is the beginning of the world, even as the Lord our Saviour said to Moses: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'"

So, we find that *Sabbath* keepers were arguing that the *Sabbath* was superior because it symbolized the completion of *Creation*. Meanwhile, Sunday keepers argued that the first day of the week took precedence because it commemorated the anniversary of the beginning of *Creation*.

Another early Church writer named *Athanasius* (c. 296-373 CE) taught a dualistic theology by recognizing the importance of the *Sabbath* but teaching that Sunday was more important:

"The Sabbath was the end of the first creation, the Lord's day was the beginning of the second in which He renewed and restored the old. In the same way as He prescribed that they should formerly observe the Sabbath as a memorial of the end of the first things, so we honor the Lord's day as being the memorial of the new creation. Indeed, He did not create another one, but He renewed the old and completed what He had begun to do."

This theology implies two different creations -- with the second one (beginning with the resurrection of *Y'shua*) taking precedence over the creation of the universe. There is no *Scriptural* basis for this belief, it was merely a theological smoke screen designed as an apologetic for Sunday worship.

### ~ The Eighth Day ~

Another reason put forth for Sunday worship was its connection with the *Eighth Day*. The *Eighth Day* (*Shemini Atzeret*), which follows the seven days of the Festival of *Sukkot* (Tabernacles), pictures the time period that follows the *Millennium*. That time period is known in Jewish eschatology as the *Olam Haba* or the *World to Come*. Therefore, the *Eighth Day* is symbolic of a *New Beginning*.

Because Sunday follows the seventh day of the week, it was called, by these theologians, the *Eighth Day*. The early Church Fathers knew about the *Eighth Day* and the *New Beginning* it represented, so they adopted it as a reason to keep Sunday rather than *Shabbat*.

*The Epistle of Barnabas* was not written by the Biblical person named *Barnabas* -- it is a pseudopigraphal document (that means it was written later by someone else who used the name *Barnabas* to make it sound legitimate). Here is a passage from that epistle:

"Further he says to them, 'Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure.' You see what he means: it is not the present Sabbaths that are acceptable to me but the one that I have made, on which having brought everything to rest, I will make the beginning of an eighth day, that is, the beginning of another world. This

is why we also observe the eighth day with rejoicing, on which Jesus also rose from the dead, and having shown himself ascended to heaven." (Bar. 13:9-11)

However, the real reason God said that He could no longer endure their *Sabbaths* and *New Moons* was because of their hypocritical and sinful behavior. After all, God was the one who ordained these observances and He changes not:

**"Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies -- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting."** (Isa. 1:13)

It is the iniquity of the people blended with the sacred meetings that God abhors -- not the sacred meetings themselves.

~ Finally ~

One final aspect that might have contributed to the choice of Sunday as the new day of worship for *Gentile Believers*, was the fact that Sunday was the most venerated day for pagan worship.

Another famous Catholic father named *Jerome* (4th century) (he is the one who first translated the *Scriptures* into Latin) made this statement:

"It is on this day that the Light of the World has appeared and on this day that the Sun of Justice has risen."

Not only was this used as an excuse to abandon *Shabbat* observance, it was also felt this could be a useful argument when trying to bring new pagans into the Church.

In the final analysis, what transpired was the Roman Church taking control of the entire Church throughout the Empire, after the fall of Jerusalem to *Hadrian* in 135 CE. They then proceeded to take it upon themselves to change times and laws -- just as *Daniel* had prophesied:

**"Thus he said:**

**"The fourth beast shall be  
A fourth kingdom on earth,  
Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms,  
And shall devour the whole earth,  
Trample it and break it in pieces.**

<sup>24</sup> **The ten horns are ten kings**

*Who shall arise from this kingdom.*

**And another shall rise after them;  
He shall be different from the first *ones*,  
And shall subdue three kings.**

<sup>25</sup> **He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,  
Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,  
And shall intend to change times and law.**

**Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand  
For a time and times and half a time.**

<sup>26</sup> **But the court shall be seated,  
And they shall take away his dominion,  
To consume and destroy *it* forever.**

<sup>27</sup> **Then the kingdom and dominion,  
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,  
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.**

**His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,  
And all dominions shall serve and obey Him."'''' (Dan. 7:23-27)**

**"He shall reign forever and ever!" (Rev. 11:15)**

~ Summary ~

In the second century of the common era, the Church at Rome became the vehicle which the adversary, *HaSatan*, used to eventually get the vast majority of Christians to abandon *Shabbat* observance for Sunday worship. Their primary reasons for wanting to separate from *Judaism* were twofold:

- ◆ Many of the *Gentile Believers* did not want to come under the authority of the *Torah* -- especially when some of the Jews were telling them that *Torah* observance included the *Oral Traditions* of the Jews as well as the *Written Torah*.
- ◆ They wanted to avoid the Roman persecution of the Jews.

In order to find a theological reason for going to Sunday worship, the Church theologians came up with a variety of reasons:

- ◆ They argued that since *Creation* began on the first day of the week, that should be the day of worship for the Church.
- ◆ They argued that since the *World to Come (Olam Haba)*, which follows the *Millennium*, was pictured by the *Eighth Day*, that should be the day of worship since the *Eighth Day* was the same day of the week as the *First Day*.
- ◆ Their best argument ended up being that Jesus (*Y'shua*) was resurrected on the first day of the week and for that reason Sunday should replace *Shabbat*.

Dr. Bacchiocchi sums up the *Shabbat* to Sunday controversy this way:

"Our study has shown that the adoption of Sunday observance in place of the Sabbath did not occur in the primitive Church of Jerusalem by virtue of the authority of Christ or of the Apostles, but rather took place several decades later, seemingly in the Church of Rome, solicited by external circumstances. Even those Biblical *testimonia* which were drawn from the Old Testament (references to the numbers eight and one) to prove the legitimacy and superiority of Sunday over the Sabbath were mostly based on unwarranted criteria of Biblical hermeneutic, and consequently they were in time abandoned. This means, to put it bluntly, that Sunday observance does not rest on a foundation of Biblical theology and/or of apostolic authority, but on later contributory factors ..." (p. 309)

Shalom,

DEW & SAW

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# Remember-Observe-Keep

Therefore the children of Israel  
Shall keep the Sabbath,  
To observe the Sabbath  
Throughout their generations  
As a perpetual covenant.  
*Exodus 31:16*



verb is defined as "a word used to describe an action, state, or occurrence." There are four important action words (and one noun) used in *Scripture* which give important instructions concerning how to celebrate the *Sabbath* day. The first two were declared when the *Ten Commandments* were given at *Mount Sinai*:

**""Remember [zakar] the Sabbath day, to keep [not found in the Hebrew text] it holy [kadash].""**  
(Ex. 20:8)

In Hebrew, the first word is *zakar* and it means:

#2142 זָכַר *zakar* {zaw-kar'}

**Meaning:** 1) to remember, recall, call to mind ... 1b) (Niphal) to be brought to remembrance, ... 1c5) to make a memorial, make remembrance.

We are told how to *zakar* "remember" this day by taking the action of making it a "set-apart" or "holy" day:

#6942 קָדַשׁ *qadash* {kaw-dash'}

**Meaning:** 1) to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, be sanctified, be separate 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to be set apart.

When *Moshe* (Moses) reiterated the *Ten Commandments*, near the end of his life, he stated the *Sabbath* command this way:

**""Observe [*shamar*] the Sabbath day, to keep it holy [*kadash*], as the LORD [*YHVH*] your God commanded you. ... <sup>15</sup> And remember [*zakar*] that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD [*YHVH*] your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD [*YHVH*] your God commanded you to keep [*asah*] the Sabbath day.""**  
(Deut. 5:12, 15)

This passage introduces two more Hebrew verbs -- *shamar* and *asah*:

#8104 שָׁמַר *shamar* {shaw-mar'}

**Meaning:** 1) to keep, guard, observe, give heed 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to keep, have charge of ... 1a7) to observe, celebrate, keep (sabbath or covenant or commands), perform (vow).

#6213 עָשָׂה *asah* {aw-saw'}

**Meaning:** 1) to do, fashion, accomplish, make ... 1a2e) to attend to, put in order 1a2f) to observe, celebrate.



There are other important passages in the *Torah* which give instructions about the *Sabbath*:

**""You shall keep [shamar] the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy [kodesh] to you. ... <sup>16</sup> Therefore the children of Israel shall keep [shamar] the Sabbath, to observe [asah] the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. ... <sup>17</sup> It is a sign [oat] between Me and the children of Israel forever;""** (Ex. 31:14, 16, 17)

Here, the words translated as "keep" and "observe" are reversed in the English translation. *Shamar* becomes "keep" and *asah* becomes "observe." A new word, *oat* (a noun) is added:

#0226 אוֹת 'owth {oat}

**Meaning:** 1) sign, signal 1a) a distinguishing mark 1b) banner 1c) remembrance.

What can we learn from these five important words that are directly connected to the *Sabbath*?

To begin with, Ex. 20:8 tells us to *zakar* or "remember" the *Sabbath* day and to make it *kodash* or "holy" time. Deut. 5:12 tells us that we are not only to "remember" the *Sabbath*, we are to *shamar* or "observe" it in a special manner. Deut. 5:15 tells us that we are to make *Sabbath* a special day by *asah* or "celebrating" it.

Finally, Ex. 31:17, tells us *Sabbath* is to be an *oat* -- a "sign" or "banner" -- that advertises the *Sabbath* to other people in the hope they will begin to observe it as well. *Oat* identifies those who observe or keep the *Sabbath* day "holy" as God's people.

So what do modern Christians do, for the most part? They have forgotten about "keeping" or "observing" or "celebrating" the *Sabbath* and observe Sunday as their day of worship instead. Even those who do observe the *Sabbath* -- sometimes do not make it "set-apart" or "holy." Some treat it like a common day -- a day on which people find many imaginary "oxen in the ditch" to keep them from true *Sabbath* observance.

Certainly, one is to help pull an "ox (or a car) out of a ditch" if someone truly needs help. It would be wrong to leave them stranded, but that is not to be the primary focus:

**"Then He [Y'shua] answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?' <sup>6</sup> And they could not answer Him regarding these things."** (Luke 14:5-6)

Let us make the *Sabbath* day the focal point of our entire week. Let us worship, on that day, in a manner that is pleasing to our *Father* in heaven. But it is also a good day to perform "*mitzvot*" (good deeds) -- to visit the sick and care for the widows and the orphans:

**"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."** (James 1:27)

Don't forget!

Shalom,

DEW & SAW

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