

## Seventh Day Sabbath

By Bob Downey

Is the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath, or Shabbat as the scriptures call it, still to be followed or has it changed to the first day of the week, Sunday, like most Christians observe today? I grew up in the Presbyterian Church. It probably would not be shocking to hear that this subject was never mentioned in my entire childhood and teenage years; it isn't in most Protestant denominations. So let's tackle this subject. First, don't take anything stated here, or from anyone, as true. Be like the Bereans as Paul commended and search the scriptures to see that what anyone states is true and make certain to read the entire context of passages, for I contend that it is the practice of reading scripture out of context that has given rise to much of this debate. Once we begin to follow or listen to a person exclusively instead of checking with the Word of God ourselves, we open ourselves to deception. In the course of this discussion, I will ask you to set aside 1800 years of theology and look at the scriptures without bias to consider what they reveal. We will first look at the Law of God, then how the first day of the week is discussed through scripture, the practices of the apostles and the early church, and the early church writers of the post apostolic era will be mentioned as to whether there is a mandate for the seventh day or the first day. Finally, I will discuss other passages commonly used to wrongly justify First Day Sabbath observance. These topics will be discussed in this order for specific reasons that will be obvious as the discussion progresses. Also, the passages that will be covered first from the Older Testament, or Tanakh, were in the minds of the New Testament writers. Throughout this discussion, please keep in mind one passage from the Psalms: Psalm 119:89 "Forever, *ADONAI*, Your word stands firm in the heavens." The word, "forever" here comes from the root "olam"; the same word used for one of God's names, El Olam, the Everlasting God.

Let's start with the Torah or the first five books of the Bible to see how the Sabbath was defined there and see if the command for its observance was to be temporary.

When the Israelites set to leave Egypt, we find that Yahweh had them observe Shabbat *before* the giving of the Law: Exodus 16

<sup>22</sup> On the sixth day (*sixth day equals Friday to modern society*) they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, <sup>23</sup> he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'" <sup>24</sup> So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. <sup>25</sup> Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. <sup>26</sup> Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none." (Notice it says that the seventh day is a holy Sabbath to the Lord, not a holy day for Israel.)

<sup>27</sup> On the seventh day (*seventh day equals Sabbath or Saturday to modern society*) some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. <sup>28</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? <sup>29</sup> See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the

sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.”<sup>30</sup> So the people rested on the seventh day.

The Law of Moses, as many call the Torah given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the creation of the Mosaic Covenant had not yet come to pass when the events in this passage had occurred. But God tells the Children of Israel, or B’nei Elohim, to observe the Sabbath. Why? Genesis 2:3 “So God blessed the **seventh day** and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” When did He bless the seventh day? – At creation for all mankind. I like some scripture versions that state that God blessed the Sabbath and sanctified it, or set it apart. This alone should be enough for any believer. God, in one of the first statements after creation, set apart a day as holy unto Him. The scripture doesn’t say, “He set it apart and made it Holy temporarily”, or “until”. Scripture tells us in Psalm 119:89 that “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” KJV. How long? Forever.

The Fourth Commandment is Exodus 20:8:

“Remember the Yom Shabbat (Day of Sabbath) to keep it holy. You are to work six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Shabbat to YHWH your God. In it, you shall not do any work-not you, nor your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your cattle, nor the outsider that is within your gates. For in six days Adonai made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is within them, and rested on the seventh day. Thus YHWH blessed Yom Shabbat (the day of Sabbath), and made it holy.”

What else does Torah, or the Law of God, reveal about the true Sabbath of the Lord? Shabbat is considered even more important than Yom Kippur and the other High Holy Days to those of the Jewish observance. It is the first of the Feasts (or appointed times) discussed in Leviticus 23 and is the only one specifically mentioned in the Genesis creation account. Shabbat is also the only one of the moadim (appointed times of the Lord) that is said to be its own everlasting covenant. Others are said to be everlasting (olam) statutes, but not covenants. Exodus 31:16 "So Bnei-Yisrael (the Children of Israel) is to keep **the** Shabbat, to observe the Shabbat throughout their generations as a perpetual/everlasting covenant." The word used for perpetual is, again, the Hebrew word "olam" "עֹלָם", meaning from forever to forever. That is the time period also covering this covenant with His people. It is also the only one of the Appointed Times, or moadim, discussed at Creation itself as I mentioned earlier, Genesis 2:3 "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it He ceased from all His work that God created for the purpose of preparing." More about "olam" or "everlasting" or "perpetual". This word describing the period the Shabbat covenant is in effect is the same word used to describe the covenant, signified by the rainbow, God made with Noah (Genesis 9:16) – which most believers will say is still in effect by the way. The Sabbath is the identifying mark of the Jewish faith that is the promise by God that He will renew the nation, His people, it is a visible practice of *bittachon* (trusting in the Lord) that honors YHWH as both Creator and Redeemer. To say it is not in effect, is to tell the Jew, “you were punished for nothing since God abandoned Sabbath anyway” – not really God’s character is it.

Perhaps many will attempt to get around the Exodus 31:16 passage by saying that “the forever covenant is with Israel, not the gentile church”. First the reader would have to say that God has different rules for different people, again not really God’s character. Also, if we are to take Paul and Peter seriously when they stated that we are now children of Israel if we are in Christ Jesus, then we should relook at this passage.

Romans 11: 16-18 <sup>16</sup> If the firstfruit is holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. <sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off and you—being a wild olive—were grafted in among them and became a partaker of the root of the olive tree with its richness, <sup>18</sup> do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, it is not you who support the root but the root supports you.

The believers in Rome were only about 30% Jewish and 70% Gentile according to early church historians, so Paul in Romans 11 above was speaking to the Gentiles as being grafted into the tree of Abraham. Chapter 1 of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians also states that we have been adopted as sons in Messiah Yeshua. We, Jew and Gentile, will equally be partakers of the benefits of the covenantal promises of God most will agree. But modern “Christianity” doesn’t want to believe that we should obey the same guidelines – that means, in essence, that the non-chosen people have a favored status above the *chosen people* of God, which cannot be as we are blessed, according to scripture, through Abraham and His descendents.

Galatians 3:6-9 <sup>6</sup> Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” <sup>7</sup> know then that those who have faith are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> The Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the Good News to Abraham in advance, saying, “All the nations shall be blessed through you.” <sup>9</sup> So then, the faithful are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful one.

1 Peter 2:9 <sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. – Here Peter uses the same terminology as Exodus 19:5–6 in reference to believers in Yeshua, identifying them with Children of Israel.

Perhaps an argument can be made that these passage means we are metaphorically children of Israel? Will we share in Israel’s blessing in the coming Kingdom of God physically or metaphorically? Paul tells us in Romans that you are a son of Abraham if you are circumcised spiritually (Romans 2:28-29) and that even physical descendants that are not spiritually circumcised are not descendants of Abraham in reality. To get around these passages, you have to go outside the Word of God and go to “meanings” that modern scholars attribute to these passages. Scripture is clear, we, through Yeshua Messiah, are adopted sons of promise, grafted into the olive tree of Israel.

Something not usually recognized here is in when Paul quotes Genesis 12:3 and 18:18. The Hebrew word used here for “blessed” is “Nivrechu”. Most sources will state the root of this word is “barach”

which but it is, but it is also tied to the root word “mavarach” which means “to graft”. Paul tells us that the world will be blessed by being grafted into the tree of Abraham. This cannot be simple coincidence; there is intended meaning in this.

The next argument used to abolish the Sabbath in favor of the first day of the week, Sunday, is that “The Sabbath was only for the Jew in the Old Testament, not the Gentile.” The problem is that this statement does not square with scripture. Exodus 23:12 “You are to do your work **for** six days, but on **the** seventh day you will rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and **also the** son of your handmaid and **the outsider** may be refreshed.” There are several references to having the outsider within your gates rest on the Sabbath. Also, Strangers that bound themselves to Israel were also to abide by the Sabbath laws. *Isaiah 56:6* “*And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—*” (The whole chapter is about foreigners keeping Shabbat). If we are not Jews, why would we worry with the Law given to Moses? This is God’s Law, not the Law of the Jews or Israel; remember I asked the reader to keep Psalm 119 in mind throughout this document which says it is forever stated in heaven. The Jews refer to Torah as the Law of Moses because it was handed to Moses, but it is always acknowledged as God’s Law: belonging to God.

I believe that this is a chance to take another step towards returning to the ways of old, 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christianity, “The Way”. If you don’t agree, then please consider which of the other Commandments did the Lord abolish? Don’t you think that when He sanctified the seventh day at *Creation*, that He knew when Jesus would be crucified many thousands of years later. Most Christians would agree that Yeshua was present at the sanctification of the 7<sup>th</sup> day at Creation. John 1 states He was. Can God change His mind about what is holy and what isn’t? Of course not! I would think that changing one of His commandments would be a big deal. Jesus, in Matthew 5, expanded the meaning of the commandments to the meaning in one’s heart, but never diminished them. If He meant to change it, don’t you think He would have stated it clearly. Jesus stated it – “For truly, I say to you, **until heaven and earth pass away**, not an iota, not a dot, will **pass** from the Law **until** all is accomplished.” Matthew 5:18. That is pretty clear.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 states the coming of the New Covenant and its details. Surely, something as important as the changing of God’s eternal law would be mentioned there.

<sup>31</sup> “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Most New Testament scholars and Pastors accept that the Prophet Jeremiah is prophesying about the New Covenant that Yeshua brought with His earthly ministry, death, burial, and resurrection in chapter 31. Which law was God to write on the heart of all people of the House of Israel and the House of Judah in the above passage? Was it all of the Law, or Torah, except the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment? No - His Law. That means it is in each and every heart that accepts Him to know and recognize when we break His law, including the Sabbath. Many will say that this applies to only the descendants of Jacob then since that is who he mentions. However, most scholars will also state that this is the basis for the New Covenant and if it applies only to the descendents of Israel, then the rest of the world is left without a Savior, which is contradicted throughout the New Testament scriptures as Yeshua and His disciples make it clear that this applies to ALL that follow Him. Additionally, it is clear that Yeshua was specifically fulfilling this prophecy in Matthew 5, making the law a heart issue. It is clear that all those that accept Jesus as Lord and Savior become adopted into the family of Israel, grafted in as wild olive branches as Romans 11 stated above.

Additional passages from the prophets are probably the most compelling for believers in Messiah Yeshua to observe the Sabbath. Isaiah 66:23 *“And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another and from one Shabbat to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith YHWH.”* Isaiah was prophesying of the coming Kingdom of God on Earth; a time when all the world would come to worship before Messiah on the Sabbaths. Jesus observed them when He was with us and will observe them when He comes again. Ezekiel also discusses the same events in chapter 46:

“Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened. <sup>2</sup>The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. <sup>3</sup>The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the new moons.”

This passage and those surrounding it are a little bewildering to most believers as it is discussing the millennial kingdom but also mentions the people coming for the feasts of the Lord and also burnt offerings – during the reign of Messiah. I think there is much we have gotten wrong. I know that Yeshua was the last and perfect sacrifice, but scripture also doesn't lie that according to Ezekiel, there will be burnt offerings in this period.

What is clear from these passages from Isaiah and Ezekiel is that the entire world will celebrate the Biblical Sabbath when Messiah Yeshua comes again, just as He did at His first coming. How then, can we possibly think that He wants the “Christian church” to not observe it now? Keep all of this in mind as we explore the New Testament passages and early church history below.

The First Day of the week, or Sunday as we call it today, is spoken of on three occasions that I have found and these are the primary passages used to justify Sunday worship, the first when Jesus rose from the dead (John 20:1, Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1), Acts 20, and 1 Corinthians 16:

Acts 20:7-8 - <sup>7</sup>On **the first day of the week**, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. <sup>8</sup>There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.

In this instance, Paul began preaching after sundown on Saturday evening, after the traditional Hebrew Sabbath ended thus beginning to preach on the first day of the week. He preached through the night with the intent of travelling all day starting on Sunday morning. Many believe that this meeting above incorporated communion, as if they were observing the Sabbath on the "first day", because it says that they gathered to break bread together. This simply means they ate together as it states in Acts 2:46 ...'And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.' ... It was a daily thing that they came together to eat. Irenaeus tells us from his 1<sup>st</sup> century writings that they broke bread together whenever they gathered - it was considered similar to a family meal. Also, if Paul was intent on keeping the 1<sup>st</sup> day as the Sabbath, then why was he intent on traveling the entire day of Sunday, the *first day*. This fact alone should make people take a different look at this passage; Paul clearly didn't have any problem working on Sunday. Luana Fabri, in her article entitled "*Breaking of Bread the Jewish Understanding*" states:

The "breaking of bread" is something which is done only in the context of a meal. In fact, the Talmud (Jewish Oral Law), uses the term only in reference to the blessing at the start of the meal. The one who says the blessing over the bread is referred to as the one who "breaks bread".

We see here that the Jewish customs in use among the First Century believers would have rendered this practice as *only* eating a meal.

The second passage commonly used from 1 Corinthians states:

1 Corinthians 16:2 <sup>2</sup>On **the first day of every week**, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be *no collecting when I come*.

In this passage from 1 Corinthians 16, Paul makes the plea to set aside the offering on the first day, nothing else. It is also clear that he will not be there on the 1<sup>st</sup> day, or Sunday as we would call it, as he is specific that this practice will allow the collection to be in place *when he comes*. Although some would argue that he planned to come on Shabbat, it is clear that his coming would be some time in the future and he was simply stating a weekly practice to keep. He was giving the body the requirement that each person set aside *whatever is gained* weekly. What we are told of their Sabbath practices in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century is that the Jews were to abstain from handling money on the Sabbath. As a practice they would begin collecting the offering the first day of the week; which squares with the second half of this passage "so that there will be no collecting when I come". It was also the practice to set aside from the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits as was commanded in the Torah, in other words, to set aside the money made on the *first day* so the Lord was taken care of *first*. This became a standard practice throughout the Christian body of the late

1<sup>st</sup> Century as is chronicled by early church writers. Also, we see in verse eight that Paul was to stay on at Ephesus until Shavuot (Pentacost) which shows he was keeping the feast there.

As discussed earlier, the resurrection on the first day is mentioned in all four Gospels, when Messiah arose from the dead and exited the garden tomb:

Matthew 28:1 - Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb.

Mark 16:1-2 – When Shabbat was over, Miriam of Magdala, Miriam the mother of Jacob, and Salome bought spices so that they might come and anoint Yeshua's body. Very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they came to the tomb.

Luke 24:1 – Now on the first day of the week, at daybreak, the women came to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared.

John 20:1 – Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it is still dark, Miriam from Magdala comes to the tomb. She sees that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb.

What I find most interesting in these accounts in dealing with Shabbat is what it does not say. It doesn't say "Abrogating the seventh day, Yeshua instead chose the first day" or "He rose on the first day, setting aside the original Sabbath". No, instead we see four points:

1. That the women waited until **after** the Sabbath to come to the tomb
2. That **Yeshua Himself didn't rise on the Seventh day** but **waited until the first day observing the Shabbat even during His death** (he arose during the night of the first day). We know that He rose the first day as Mark 1:9 states, "After He had risen on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Miriam of Magdala...". The resurrection was accomplished after Shabbat has ended.
3. The women that were closest to him, one being His mother, had no idea, having been with Him throughout His entire earthly ministry, that Sabbath should be changed. If He had communicated this concept, it certainly wasn't before His death.
4. There is no record after His death and resurrection of Yeshua bringing up Sabbath.

We, as believers, listen to many people who read into this account what scholars want it to say, while ignoring what it actually says and doesn't say. Most scholars today read into the accounts a bias for observing the first day of the week, self justifying this observance, not through scripture, but through their own desires to make the ends justify the means.

One other important point that needs to be made is Acts 1 and 2. Acts 1:4-5

<sup>4</sup>Now while staying with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father promised—which, He said, "you heard from Me. <sup>5</sup>For John immersed with water, but you will be immersed in the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* (Holy Spirit) not many days from now." – Yeshua tells them to wait for the Holy Spirit. When did it come?

Acts 2:1-3 “When the day of *Shavuot* (Pentacost) had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And tongues like fire spreading out appeared to them and settled on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> They were all filled with the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* and began to speak in other tongues as the *Ruach* enabled them to speak out.

<sup>5</sup> Now Jewish people were staying in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.”

It is clear that Yeshua’s disciples were gathered waiting *and* observing Shavuot. If, they had abandoned the Biblical Sabbath under Yeshua’s direction, then they would not have been together with all the Jews of the nations together. Leviticus 23:15-16 states how to set the day for Shavuot:

<sup>15</sup> “Then you are to count from the morrow after the *Shabbat*, from the day that you brought the omer<sup>[c]</sup> of the wave offering, seven complete *Shabbatot*. <sup>16</sup> Until the morrow after the seventh *Shabbat* you are to count fifty days,<sup>[d]</sup> and then present a new grain offering to *ADONAI*.

If the disciples were now using the First day, or Sunday, as a Sabbath, they would have been celebrating Shavuot on a different day than the rest of the Jewish world, and all would be leaving Jerusalem instead of staying for the Feast.

No we turn to the epistles to see how the early church acted toward the Seventh day after the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Are there instances of Paul specifically observing Shabbat? YES, over 15.

Acts 13:42 ...'And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be **preached to them the next sabbath.**' They heard Paul preaching on the Sabbath and waited until the next Sabbath until he preached again.

Acts 13:44 ...'And the **next sabbath day came almost the whole city together** to hear the word of God.'

Acts 18:4 ...'And he reasoned **in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.**' ... We can see that it was Paul's custom to preach in the synagogue every Sabbath Day

Acts 17:2 ...'As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.' (This, by the way was after the Acts 15 Council).

Was Paul considered to be one that observed Shabbat – YES.

Acts 23:9 ...'And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man.'

“We find no evil in this man” would have been the farthest from the truth if Paul would have been known not to observe Shabbat and was practicing it on the First Day. Paul MUST have been keeping the seventh day Sabbath, as outlined in the Fourth Commandment for the Pharisees to have said this.

In total, there are only 3 events detailed when the first day of the week, or Sunday as we call it today, is mentioned in the New Testament: Christ's resurrection, Paul preaching to the disciples before he left on a journey, and when Paul asked the Christians to lay aside money or food before he returned. On the



other hand the seventh Day Sabbath is mentioned on more than 15 occasions. Are there instances in scripture of anyone observing the first day of the week for a Sabbath? None.

There is one other place in scripture that is usually pulled out to refer to Sunday. Many people will bring out the verse in Revelation that mentions “The Lord’s Day” to say that John was referring to Sunday. Many will state “If it wasn’t a practice to observe Sunday as the Lord’s Day, then why is it mentioned here from John being in the spirit on the Lord’s Day”. Let’s look at this passage starting in verse 9:

<sup>9</sup>I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit *on the Lord’s day*, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup>saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

The phrase “the Lord’s day” is only found here. Most commentaries on this verse will state that this was the Christian Sabbath (1<sup>st</sup> day or Sunday) as the Jewish Sabbath was now done away with. The problem is that scripture does not agree with that baseless conclusion. We get that this refers to the 1st day of the week from the 2nd and 3rd century writers that had distanced themselves from the Jews due to the oppressive taxes and physical oppression and their personal backgrounds in Greek philosophy. Ignatius, in 107 A.D., was the first to use this but also wrote of distancing themselves from the believers with more Jewish practices, which would have included both Polycarp and Irenaeus, both of which observed seventh day Sabbath. In reality, it is possible that although “Lord’s” here is an adjective referring to the day, it also can be used to mean the day belonging to the Lord, or “the Day of the Lord” – the Day of His wrath. Many scholars will admit that this is a possible but unlikely meaning. Most will say it is unlikely though because scholars believe it means the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week; this is circular reasoning. Having this phrase mean “the Day of the Lord” squares with John’s vision better and would make sense in the passage more. It is only considered unlikely because our tradition says otherwise. Also, scripture must be defined through scripture when debate arises. There is no possible allusion to this phrase meaning Sunday anywhere in scripture.

The practice of meeting on the 1st day of the week, or Sunday, we see as early as the early 2nd Century and coincides with rebellions against the Roman authorities and later the Bar Kokhba revolt with the scattering of the Jews from Roman Palestine. The early Greek influence over the church saw many people accepting secular and local customs to hide themselves from persecution, causing them to separate themselves from their Jewish counterparts in outward practice. The problem is, if we were given the command to change the day, don’t you think that it would be outlined in scripture instead of having to read meaning into the Bible (something we are expressly told not to do) to figure this out. This is the important point, If all scripture can be defined or at least supported using scripture then support for the meaning of this passage is in scripture, which means this passage of Revelation cannot mean the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week as that is not mentioned anywhere in scripture as I have discussed. Advocates of the 1<sup>st</sup> Day meaning, MUST go outside of scripture to support their definition of this passage.

Another verse often used to say the Sabbath is not to be observed is in Colossians 2.

“<sup>16</sup>Therefore, do not let anyone pass judgment on you in matters of food or drink, or in respect to a festival or new moon or *Shabbat*. <sup>17</sup>These are a foreshadowing of things to come, but the reality is Messiah.” - Colossians 2:16

Your Bible may read “shadows” instead of “foreshadowing”. - The proper use of this is a foreshadowing just as all of the Feasts of the Lord are. Even so, this might on the surface seem to say we are not to be bothered with how others think of us in respect to these days, referring to the Jews internal to the synagogue that were still practicing a seventh day Shabbat. However, that is the conclusion we reach when we are looking at the verses with the intent of justifying our action to not obey Sabbath. This church was largely Gentile that had recently come out of paganism. The pagans were critical of the Sabbaths and New Moon Festivals and would not observe these days. For instance, if you saw a father and daughter at a dinner table in a restaurant with nothing on the table and the father looks at the daughter and states, “Don’t let anyone judge you in relation to praying before meals”, you would never conclude he is telling her NOT to pray. Yet that is what the modern Christian says this passage means. Now look at the verse with that understanding. It is saying don’t let those still observant of those old pagan ways pass judgment while you observe the Sabbath and New Moon. The context of the previous passages lend to this as well. Since Christ took the punishment of spiritual adultery for all of us, nailing it to the cross (yes, that is what that passage refers to – sin nailed to the cross), let no one judge you now in observing these festivals. They are a foreshadowing of what we will be doing in His kingdom. The Jews didn’t look at the word shadow as negatively as we do in our society. A shadow today is thought of as dark and evil. To the Jews, a shadow was a poor copy of the real. They looked at it as a “rehearsal” or foreshadowing and also that the shadow often precedes the person. You see the shadow as a rough outline, then the person appears; that is how they perceived the term; a glorious foreshadowing. This is born out in this passage from Isaiah 66:23 as stated above “And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another and from one Shabbat to another shall all flesh come to worship before me saith YHWH.”

Now turn to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24 and Yeshua speaking of the times of trouble, verses 20-21.

<sup>20</sup>Pray that your escape will not happen in winter, or on *Shabbat*. <sup>21</sup>For then there will be great trouble, such as has not happened since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

Why would He care if He was doing away with Sabbath anyway. Obviously He tells us we should care that we don’t have to flee on a Sabbath. Why? Because He wants us to be able to honor *every* Sabbath. Why would He codify a law in stone just to say 1500 years or so later, “Oh, don’t need that one anymore”. Do you honestly think God didn’t plan ahead? He knew the end from the beginning according to scripture. Matthew 5:17-19 states <sup>17</sup>“Do not think that I came to abolish the *Torah* or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup>Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,

not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the *Torah* until all things come to pass.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” That is pretty clear, the Law of God, His *Torah*, will not be abolished, set aside, ended, destroyed. Instead Jesus came to fulfill, teach properly, live out completely the *Torah* of God. For Yeshua to state that he came not to “destroy the *Torah* but to fulfill” was for Him to utter a typical Rabbinical statement common for that time (and today). If someone taught improperly that were said to be destroying *Torah*. If they taught proper interpretation, they were said to be fulfilling *Torah*. This was well understood and if he had meant something else, Matthew would have had to explain it for the readers of the time in greater detail.

Another typical point the modern “church” makes to say that Sabbath was changed is that because we are to rest in Christ that we no longer need to observe Sabbath. This also states that God changed His mind. It tells us that God planned from the beginning that many Israelites would be killed and punished in less dramatic ways for not observing the Sabbath but that later on God knew it would change, making those deaths meaningless - God ordered meaningless deaths. That should get a few people’s backs up. No, it is clear from Isaiah 66:23 as stated before “That from one New Moon to another and from one Shabbat to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me saith YHWH”. This makes it clear that in the millennial reign of Messiah Yeshua, that the entire world will observe the Shabbat. Yeshua observed it when He was here. He will observe and cause the whole world to observe it when He returns. How can anyone say that we don’t need to observe it now, unless you believe Yeshua intended the “church age” to not observe it. Please find that in scripture.

Many observing 1<sup>st</sup> Day worship in the modern Christian Church will say, as stated earlier that “Christ is our rest” and “now, through Jesus, we rest in Him and so no longer have a Sabbath rest”. Yeshua said, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest in Matthew 11:28. It means a rest from the punishment of our sin and from our strivings and being burdened with sin. Through Yeshua, He has taken our burden and we have eternal rest in Him – fulfilling the meaning of Sabbath. If He was intent on overturning Sabbath, He would have needed to explain it as His statement here was a fulfillment of prophecy about Messiah from Jeremiah 6:16 “Thus says *ADONAI*: “Stand in the roads and look.

Ask for the ancient paths—  
where the good way is—and walk in it.  
Then you will find rest for your souls.  
But they said, ‘We won’t walk in it.’ “

Matthew 11 - <sup>28</sup> Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and ‘you will find rest for your souls.’  
<sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

There was an old Rabbinic saying before the time of Yeshua’s earthly ministry. It stated that Messiah would remove our burdens. That will happen for those who choose Messiah Yeshua today as He told us

He takes that burden. The Hebrews prior to Yeshua's earthly ministry believed that Messiah's kingdom would bring in a time when all people naturally obeyed Torah without burden; which Yeshua told us was true. Micah 4:1-2 tells us just that:

<sup>1</sup>But at the end of days  
the mountain of the LORD's House will be established as chief of the mountains,  
and will be raised above the hills.  
Peoples will flow up to it.  
<sup>2</sup>Then many nations will go and say:  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the House of the God of Jacob!  
Then He will direct us in His ways,  
and we will walk in His paths."  
For *Torah* will go forth from Zion,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Catch that? Torah will go out (or flow) from Zion just as stated when Messiah reigns as king.

While Jesus was in ministry on earth, He pointed to one thing continually, His Father. He loved and obeyed His Father and instructed us to do the same. Before He was led to the cross, He stated "...not My will, but Yours be done". He always pointed to the Father. Then why would we want to accept a precedent that the early church created that we find none of the writers of the scripture observing? Jesus pointed to the Father and the Father said "obey my commandments". Jesus said "obey my commandments" – after all, He is the one that wrote them in the stone to begin with according to Jesus Himself. The problem is that we inherently read into scripture small course changes to align with our practices. *We need to ask the Lord to wipe away that veil and let us look at the Word with His eyes and read the truth without presupposition.* We need to ask that we not fail the warning Yeshua gave the Pharisees in Mark 7:8 "Having left behind the commandments of God, you hold to the tradition of men." Sunday worship **IS** a tradition of men.

History finds some 2<sup>nd</sup> Century believers observing 1<sup>st</sup> day Sabbath. It is also true that MANY bodies of believers in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century observed Seventh Day Shabbat because Constantine made a law that any believers found observing seventh day Sabbath or observing the Feasts of Israel were to be cast out of the church. Some were put to death! I am not talking about the Judaizers that felt that they could earn salvation through works, which also is a lie we need to guard against. No, these Sabbath keepers were a remnant of the original body of believers.

Paul makes it clear that the burden of the law has been lifted in Romans, not the Law itself. Jesus/Yeshua's burden is light. In Messiah Yeshua, we realize that as we follow Him, we will want to obey His commandments, not out of burden, but from love and obedience. The law is not a burden to those who love the Lord, it is a joy. The moment we see Shabbat as a burden, it stops being Shabbat and becomes a work that we must avoid. The moment we see not committing adultery as a law we

have to follow, it becomes a work and it is not in our heart. We can come up with many excuses to not obey Sabbath, but lay open the scripture and read it in context of a God that NEVER changes and see what it says. Always we read into scripture our practices; take them out and we are left with the eternal Word of God alone.

This is not meant to be a treatise on whether the Law is for today or not. Suffice to say for now that the *burden* of the Law has been lifted. We can also say the weight, the punishment also has been lifted for those that are in Christ Jesus. However, scripture in 1 John 5:2 “We know that we **love** God’s children by this—when we **love** God and **obey** His **commandments**.” – God’s commandments. 1 John 5:3 “For this is the **love** of God—that we **keep** His **commandments**. And His **commandments** are not burdensome.” Is it a burden for you, the reader, to not murder (to not hate maybe), to not steal, to not commit adultery (or lust)? When we are abiding in Jesus of Nazareth I am claiming that it is not. It isn’t always easy, but it isn’t a burden.

Probably one of the most interesting discussions on this topic after the Apostolic era is that between Polycarp (a direct student of the Apostle John), Irenaeus, and Anicetus of Rome (in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century) in which Irenaeus discussed that, although Polycarp observed the Feast of Passover and the other feasts as did Paul and the other disciples, they remained in fellowship with those in Rome (Anicetus) that celebrated the timing for the resurrection based on the Feast of Ishtar (Easter). This is not the modern practices of Easter, just the timing changed to be based on the Julian calendar. However, they did not split on the Sabbath as it states that all of Asia minor observed the Seventh Day. Still, they felt it not important enough to break fellowship and remained in good standing with each other as Polycarp considered these to be variations in customs only.

The last passage I will discuss will be the most difficult for some as it will go against long held teaching but the Word of God, taken in context, opens understanding that has been forgotten by most - Acts 15. First, the passage that is the focus of this misunderstanding:

<sup>1</sup>Now some men coming down from Judea were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” <sup>2</sup>When Paul and Barnabas had a big argument and debate with them, the brothers appointed Paul and Barnabas with some others from among them to go up to Jerusalem to the emissaries and elders about this issue.

Here we see the start of this issue where Paul and Barnabas are sent to the Jerusalem council to take up the issue with observance of circumcision and Torah obedience as Torah as a matter of salvation. We know from Paul’s other letters that although he taught to uphold Torah that he considered it an act of obedience only and not required for salvation. As to circumcision, we also know from Romans that he felt it unnecessary but had Timothy circumcised only so the Jewish leaders would accept him.

<sup>4</sup>When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the community and the emissaries and the elders. They reported all that God had done in helping them.

<sup>5</sup> But some belonging to the party of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Torah of Moses.”

Here you see, again, Pharisees that were among the Council believe that the new believers had to be commanded to keep the Torah of Moses. Peter straightens them out, however.

<sup>7</sup> After much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose from among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the message of the Good News and believe. <sup>8</sup> And God, who knows the heart, testified to them by giving them the Ruach ha-Kodesh—just as He also did for us. <sup>9</sup> He made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts through faith. <sup>10</sup> Why then do you put God to the test by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples—which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> But instead, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Yeshua, in the same way as they are.”

Peter makes it known that their belief is salvation by grace through faith *alone*. Verse 10 is part of the misunderstanding. Peter asks why they would want to “put God to the test by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples”. The yoke he is describing was being placed around the disciples, not the Gentiles just coming to Christ. Peter continues in this important series of verses

<sup>15</sup> The words of the Prophets agree, as it is written:

<sup>16</sup> ‘After this I will return  
and rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David.  
I will rebuild its ruins  
and I will restore it,  
<sup>17</sup> so that the rest of humanity may seek the Lord—  
namely all the Gentiles who are called by My name—  
says Adonai,  
who makes these things <sup>18</sup> known from of old.’

First, verse 17 makes reference to Zechariah 8:20-23 which contains the famous passage:

Thus says Adonai-Tzva’ot, “In those days it will come to pass that ten men from every language of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”

Peter is making this connection for that moment and forward. In verse 18, Peter is referencing Isaiah 45:21.

Declare and present your case,  
Indeed, let them consult together.  
Who foretold this from ancient time?  
Who has declared it of old?  
Is it not I, Adonai?  
There is no other God beside Me

—a righteous God and a Savior—  
there is none besides Me!

Peter expected YHWH Himself to make Torah clear to the hearers hearts as the Lord led them. This is backed up in the next verses as Peter continues in verses 19 through 21.

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, I judge not to trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God— <sup>20</sup> but to write to them to abstain from the contamination of idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what is strangled, and from blood. <sup>21</sup> For Moses from ancient generations has had in every city those who proclaim him, since he is read in all the synagogues every Shabbat.”

Peter stated that God would make known the things of old then, as proof, states that Moses is proclaimed in every synagogue every Sabbath/Shabbat so if they are going to synagogue, they will hear Torah and the Lord will lay on them what is needed. Paul and Peter were careful. If they had told them that they needed to obey Torah, then it would have been misunderstood, as commentators of the Bible often do today, as required when Torah always was to be an act of obedience to God, and expression of devotion. If, however, they tell them to keep themselves ritually pure, verse 20, then they can enter the synagogues and hear the teaching of the Torah and Tanakh (entire old testament) and the Lord will reveal to them that which they need. Otherwise, they would be burdened unnecessarily.

We will jump down to verse 28 and I will use the Tree of Life Version for the wording it preserves:

<sup>28</sup> It seemed good to the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* (Holy Spirit) and to us not to place on you any greater burden than these **essentials** (emphasis mine): <sup>29</sup> that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. By keeping away from these things, you will do well.

*Shalom!*”

Notice that they call the order of abstaining as *essentials*. Do we teach this today as essential? Why would they consider this essential? This is a reference to Exodus 22:30, Exodus 34:15-17, Leviticus 3:17 which says that not eating blood is a statute forever (*olam*) throughout your generations, Leviticus 17:8-13 which places these rules on the strangers that sojourn with Israel, and Leviticus 18:6-26. In these passages, Israel is told how to remain *clean*. If they were not clean, they could not enter the synagogue and be in fellowship with the brethren.

To sum up Acts 15, Peter instructs that the Gentiles need to keep themselves to the essentials of ritual cleanliness so that they can attend synagogue on Sabbath and hear the Word of God where God, who instructs the heart, will teach them what they need to know. The new believers were saved by grace and had the Holy Spirit within them without even knowing Torah. Now they were to attend, learn, and grow into disciples. They would attend on Sabbath/Shabbat – so they were obeying Sabbath.

To sum up, both the Older and New Testaments proclaim the Sabbath as Holy and were observed by the people of God, whether that was Jew, Gentile, stranger, sojourner, etc. No passage in the New Testament (or New Covenant) scriptures states the Sabbath is no longer to be observed or that that observance is changed to another day. It was not a practice of the Apostles to meet on another day other than that they broke bread every day together. Reading scripture in context with the cultural context as well supports this understanding. The seventh day, sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, is still the Sabbath.

There are other passages of scripture that testify either directly or indirectly to the Sabbath not being changed. In addition, early historians such as Josephus and church fathers such as Polycarp and Irenaeus also make statements supporting the early church practicing seventh day, or Saturday, Sabbath. It is truly sadly ironic that Yeshua died on the cross to cleanse us of our sins and most that follow him celebrate it by breaking the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, which 1 John tells us is a sin (sin is transgression of the Law). Please dwell on the passages I have listed. If my logic is off, tell me, but use scripture. Remember, if you want to pull out scripture from Romans, Galatians, Colossians or other books that may insinuate the Law is not for today, read it in context, with these other verses in mind. I have, there isn't one that holds up. I, however, will gladly take the questions.

I will conclude this paper with a few last verses to consider.

Psalm 89:34 – “I will not violate My covenant, nor alter what My lips have uttered.” – If God states that He will not change His commands, then why should we.

Numbers 23:19-20 – “God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes his mind! Does He speak and then not do it, or promise and not fulfill it? Look, I received a command to bless. He has blessed - I cannot change it!” – A blessing of God cannot be changed by man. There is also no time in scripture when God expressly revoked it. When did God bless the Sabbath? Genesis 2:3

Genesis 2:3 – “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it He ceased from all His work that God created for the purpose of preparing.” - YHWH's first act after creation and giving Adam instructions, His first blessing, His first decree, was to bless the Sabbath and sanctify it, or set it apart. This also means it was likely that Adam obeyed the Sabbath. Adam was not a Hebrew by the way.