

Is the First Day of the Week Holy?

Here's a look at each of the passages where "first day of the week" is found in the New Testament.

Only eight passages in the entire New Testament speak of the first day of the week. Or at least they seem to. In contrast, no fewer than 60 references to the Sabbath are scattered throughout the New Testament.

Astoundingly, when the case is made for Sunday worship, these 60 Sabbath references are completely ignored, while those few that seem to refer to Sunday are seen as confirming Sunday over the Sabbath.

Of these eight passages cited to support Sunday worship, most focus on the time of the Savior's resurrection. Using His resurrection as the rationale for a worship day is groundless in the Bible. Nowhere do we find that the day of worship was to change because of His resurrection day. What's more, we will show that our Savior had already risen by Saturday night. Therefore, He arose on the Saturday Sabbath, not Sunday!

Let's now take a look at these eight passages in question. Do they support worship on the first day of the week? You decide. Here is a verse-by-verse look at each of the eight instances where the first "day" of the week is found in the New Testament.

MATTHEW 28:1:

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first [day] of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher, Matthew 28:1.

Analysis: These women were Sabbath keepers. They waited until the Sabbath was past—which occurs in Scripture at sundown—before venturing out. They were careful not to profane the day Yahweh set apart for prayer and worship. "End" is the Greek *opse*, meaning "even" or late in the day, not morning or sunrise. "Dawn" is the Greek *epiphosko*, meaning "draw on." It indicates that one thing is ending while another is beginning.

The Greek of this verse reveals the time as Sabbath at dusk, not Sunday morning. For Scriptures validating that days end and begin at sundown, see Genesis 1:5; Exodus 12:18; Leviticus 22:6-7 and 23:32; Judges 14:18; Nehemiah 13:19.

The word "day" in all of these eight New Testament references has been added by translators, which is why most versions set "day" off in italics or brackets.

In verse 6 the angel tells the women that the Savior was not there, He had risen. It was Saturday evening and He was already resurrected.

MARK 16:2:

And very early in the morning the first [day] of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun, Mark 16:2.

Analysis: This is the second time the women visit the tomb. As Matthew 28:6 tells us, He had already risen by the time the Sabbath ended at sunset.

MARK 16:9:

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

Analysis: "Was risen" is past tense (*aorist* in Greek) and describes in the indicative mood the risen state of our Savior. "Early" is the Greek *proi*, which means any time after sunset Saturday.

Punctuation was added by translators. Proper punctuation that harmonizes with the other accounts should be, "Now when Yahshua had risen, early the first [day] of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene..." It is not telling us when He had risen, but when He first appeared to Mary. He had not appeared at her first visit, which we find in John 20:1-2 (see below).

LUKE 24:1:

Now upon the first [day] of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain [others] with them, Luke 24:1.

Analysis: The Greek for "very early in the morning" is *orthrou* (dawn) and *batheos* (deep) and means "at deep dawn," or while still dark. As we will see next in John 20:1, it was not yet dawn and yet He was already gone. See Luke 24:3.

If Sunday were a rest day, they should have been resting and not bringing the spices to prepare the body for embalming. The preceding verse says they prepared the spices "and then rested the Sabbath day." Why weren't they resting now if Sunday were a sabbath day? Obviously the spices were bought and prepared on Friday between the annual High Sabbath (Thursday) and the weekly Sabbath (Saturday).

JOHN 20:1:

The first [day] of the week came Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and saw the stone taken away from the sepulcher, John 20:1.

Analysis: It was dark, not dawn. The stone had already been moved away and He had risen. This was before sunrise. "Taken away" in the Greek is *ermenon*, and in this application is the passive perfect participle, meaning "having been taken." The stone was not being taken away when she got there, but had already been taken away some time earlier. Instead of "first day of the week," reputable scholars contend it should read, "first of the Sabbaths" (Greek: *Te mia ton Sabbaton*) in the count to Pentecost (see Ethelbert Bullinger's *Companion Bible*).

19: *"Then the same day at evening, being the first [day] of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were [assembled] for fear of the Jews, came Yahshua and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace [be] unto you, John 20:19.*

Analysis: Because in Scripture a day ends and another begins at sunset, the word "evening" indicates a new day. (Remember that "day" is added by translators. It is simply the first of the week.)

This gathering is not for worship. "Assembled" is added and does not appear in any of the earlier texts. They were there behind locked doors because of their "fear of the Jews."

ACTS 20:7:

And upon the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight, Acts 20:7.

Analysis: Instead of "the first [day] of the week," the Greek reads, "first of the sabbaths," that is, the first weekly Sabbath in the count to Pentecost. They were meeting on the weekly Sabbath (Gr. *Sabbaton*)—25 years after the Ascension. They had come to break bread, meaning have a common meal, not Communion. Being also the weekly Sabbath, Paul gave a sermon. Note that there is no mention of the cup! It was a common meal.

Here in Acts we see that the holy days are still in effect (1 Cor. 5:7-8). The Savior became the wave sheaf offering, which begins the count to Pentecost, and did not do away with this notable part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Paul waited until the next day, Sunday, to travel so as not to desecrate the Sabbath.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:2:

Upon the first [day] of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as Elohim has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come, 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Analysis: The Corinthian brethren were being asked to store food for the brethren of Jerusalem who were suffering a famine (Acts 11:27-30). In verse 1 he calls it a "collection for the saints." "Collection" is the Greek *logiai* and means "gatherings." Paul wants them to have this laborious task of gathering foodstuffs completed and stored at home so that he could have the collected food ready for picking up when he came. If this were a Sabbath of rest the work of collecting food would not be going on (see Exo. 20:8-11). Nothing here about an offering plate being passed at church.

Other passages commonly used in arguments for Sunday worship:

ROMANS 14:5-6:

One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day [alike]. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards [it] unto Yahweh; and he that regards not the day, to Yahweh he does not regard [it]. He that eats, eats to Yahweh, for he gives Elohim thanks; and he that eats not, to Yahweh he eats not, and gives Elohim thanks.

Analysis: The chapter deals with fasting on certain days and eating certain things, not Sabbatizing. Whether to eat or not to eat, whether to set aside a day of fasting for Yahweh or not, whether to be vegetarian or not—these are the issues Paul is discussing. The issue of a Sabbath day is non-existent here, only "read into" the passage by some who have not studied the chapter.

GALATIANS 4:9-11:

But now, after that you have known Elohim, or rather are known of Elohim, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

Analysis: This chapter addresses how the Galatians were being influenced by both paganism and Judaizers. Confused, they slipped back into paganism (verse 8). The "weak and beggarly elements" are the rudimentary, baseless, and useless teachings that the heathens used to explain their world. Nowhere in the Bible are the words "days, months, times and years" used in reference to the appointed times of Yahweh. When Biblical writers mean the Sabbath or Holy Days, they say so.

These Galatians had returned to the weak and beggarly elements of strange deities and therefore Paul felt he may have wasted his time converting them to the truth of the Scriptures. The "days, and months, and times, and years" Paul mentions in verse 10 refer back to verse 8, meaning the heathen days they observed before they knew Yahweh.

COLOSSIANS 2:16-17:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days]: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Messiah.

Analysis: "No man" refers to someone outside the faith, the Greek meaning is anyone in a general sense. Yahweh's days are pivotal in the covenant relationship and no one foreign to this special relationship has any business telling you what to do or how to do it, Paul writes. The Body of Messiah is to judge these things that foreshadow what is to come (v. 17). Take out the word "is" added by translators in verse 17 and the message becomes clear. These days foreshadow what is to come. They give us a glimpse of the future Kingdom, when they will be enforced worldwide, while man-made days like Xmas and Easter will be banished.

REVELATION 1:10:

I was in the Spirit on the L-rd's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,
Revelation 1:10.

Analysis: "L-rd's Day" or "Day of the L-rd" refer to the Second Coming of Yahshua. They do not refer to Sunday.

Notice how the following references to "L-rd's Day" pertain to the time of Yahshua's Second Coming:

- *Woe unto you that desire the day of the L-rd! to what end is it for you? the day of the L-rd is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the L-rd be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?* Amos 5:18-20.

- *The great day of the L-rd is near, it is near, and hastes greatly, [even] the voice of the day of the L-rd: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers,* Zephaniah 1:14-16.

- *For the day [is] near, even the day of the L-rd is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down,* Ezekiel 30:3-4.

- *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the L-rd come,* Joel 2:31.

- *Behold, I will send you Eliyah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the L-rd,* Malachi 4:5.

- *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the L-rd so comes as a thief in the night,* 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

- *But the day of the L-rd will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,* 2 Peter 3:10.

- *For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?* Revelation 6:17.

The Sabbath day is a sign of Yahweh's Covenant with man (Ezek. 20:12). If you are keeping it, you are not only commemorating His creation, but you are also showing Him that you love Him and want to comply with His will. By keeping the Saturday Sabbath we acknowledge Him as Creator and Redeemer (Exo. 20:8-11, Deut. 5:12-15). He rested on the seventh day, not the first day of the week.

The Fourth Commandment is devoted to the Sabbath day. We as modern Israel are to observe the days Israel of old was given for a perpetual covenant (Exod. 31:16).

Sabbath in the New Testament

Following are only a few passages that reveal that the seventh-day Sabbath was and should be kept in the New Testament today:

• *And He [Yahshua] 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 for to read, Luke 4:16.*

• *And when the [Gentiles] were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. ...And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of Elohim, Acts 13:42, 44. (Notice that even the Gentiles came to hear Paul on the Sabbath.)*

• *And Paul as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, Acts 17:2.*

• *And he [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks, Acts 18:4.*

Are you willing to walk in all the truth you are given?

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