

Heidelberg Catechism –103-2 – Which Day is the Sabbath Day?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Why do we not worship on Saturdays as the Jews did? We don't worship on Saturdays because God required we change the day we worship.

There are many such changes in the Bible of incidental things. For example, your children must get the covenant sign. That can't change. But the covenant sign your children must get can be and has changed (the incidentals) from circumcision to baptism.

So let's learn from God how he has changed the Sabbath Day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.

Our headings are:

Before Christ the Sabbath was on Saturday

After Christ the Sabbath was on Sunday

Long after Christ the Sabbath was on Sunday

Our goals are: **That you will properly understand which is the Sabbath Day and keep the Sabbath Day on the day God has commanded, and do it for Christ's glory and your good.**

Before Christ the Sabbath was on Saturday

1. The Sabbath was a creation ordinance – one of three.

A creation ordinance is a law that was given from the beginning of the world. **Other creation ordinances were marriage and procreation (having children).** These cannot change.

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

2. You will notice the 4th command starts with “remember” - remember to keep the Sabbath day holy.

This means the Sabbath was there even before the 10 commands were given on stone tablets at Sinai.

Exodus 16:22 And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the

congregation came and told Moses. 23 Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: **'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'**"

God gave manna each day for that day so the Israelites would have food as they traveled through the desert from Egypt to Canaan. **If they picked up too much manna for one day so that it was left over for the next day, it bred worms.** But **on the 6th day they were required to gather 2X the manna for the 6th and the 7th day, the Sabbath.** The manna picked up the day before for Sabbath manna did not breed worms.

This confirmed the **existence and the honoring of the Sabbath.**

3. "Sabbath" does not only mean 7th; Sabbath means "rest" also; the rest day simply was put on the 7th day.

Emphasis was not put on the uniqueness of the 7th day but on the rest.

Remember how you used to Xerox a page? Xerox is not a verb, but they made some of the early photocopiers.

After Christ the Sabbath was on Sunday

1. Not all commands in the Scriptures are explicitly stated; some commands are given by Apostolic or Christ's example.

Let us begin to examine the evidences.

2. Jesus was raised from the dead on the 1st day of the week.

When we keep the Sabbath on the 1st day of the week we celebrate Christ's resurrection—the completion of our re-creation.

While Saturday Sabbath celebrated your creation, Sunday Sabbath pictured your re-creation in Jesus Christ.

John 20:1 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.

With Christ's work of redemption done, he stopped on Sunday – the new Sabbath, just as he stopped after his initial creation.

3. After his resurrection, Jesus customarily met with his disciples on Sunday as they

gathered together.

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

This was a closed-door meeting, but this was **only because of fear**. Their doors would have been opened if they did not fear.

John 20:26 And **after eight days** His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

In this 2nd case, this seemed less of a secret meeting, but the mentioning of the day is remarkable. This was **the first day of the week**. We know this according to Jewish counting! Josephus, confirmed this. Any part of a day was considered a day **and written as a "day and night."** (*Day and night I worry about you!*)

Many cultures, even today, count time the same way - *like the Koreans when they count age.*

Remember how the Bible says Jesus was buried for 3 days and 3 nights? It didn't mean 3X24 hour days, but parts of 3 days.

We can conclude Christ himself is stipulating the change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday by meetings with his disciples on Sunday – not on the old Sabbath.

4. After Jesus returned to heaven, the churches that were formed met regularly for worship on Sundays.

Acts 20:7 Now on **the first day of the week**, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

Luke literally said: On the first...the Sabbath- "sabbaton." Our translation ignores "sabbaton" choosing to translate the intention rather than the word. **When the disciples came together to break bread, it did not mean they came to have lamb chops together.** It meant they came together for worship – part of which was for the Lord's Supper. The reason worship was called the Breaking of Bread was because it was celebrated each time people came together for worship.

In Acts 20:7, Apostle Paul preached to the brothers on Sunday. **And the apostles continued the principle of remembering and honoring the resurrection of Jesus (re-creation) by meeting on Sunday instead of Saturday.**

If Saturday Sabbath were not changed, then God's people would be sinning by not working on 2 days as a regular course of life – the old Sabbath Day and Sunday. **But God commands man to work for 6 days and rest and worship for 1.**

5. The Bible teaches the Sabbath was on Sunday.

1Corinthians 16: 1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the **first day of the week** let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

Paul literally said: On the **1st – the Sabbath.** Our translation ignores “sabbaton.” The Corinthians were called to collect offerings for poor Christians in Jerusalem when they gathered on Sunday. So Christians continued the actions of the Sabbath of helping the poor, except it was the **Sunday Sabbath, not the Saturday Sabbath.**

6. The Apostle John, as he worshipped on Sunday, was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit **on the Lord's Day**, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

Contemporaries of John confirmed the “Lord's Day” was Sunday. Many early versions of the Bible simply included it was the first day of the week. The term Lord's Day came because people gathered to eat the Lord's Supper. This term was in use in Rome, where the Caesar's (Emperor) Day was the day he paid his employees. So God blesses his people!

7. Now see remarkable pieces of evidence in support of the change of Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

God planned for the Sabbath to be on Sunday in the 3 major Old Testament feasts—which prefigured the work of Jesus. All 3 of those feasts were on Sundays...not Saturdays, the usual Sabbath day.

a. The Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Passover) pictured Christ's sacrifice for sinners. Sunday!

Leviticus 23:6 'And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast

of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.

Day 1 of the 1st month was a Sabbath...Day 15th would be the day after the Sabbath, which was Sunday.

b. The Feast of Pentecost (Weeks or Harvest) pictured the giving of new life to the church...as when the Holy Spirit came. Pentecost, in the New Testament, took place on Sunday.

Leviticus 23:10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 'He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. **15** 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. **16** 'Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.

Fifty days after the Sabbath is Sunday – 7 weeks +1.

c. The Feast of the Ingathering (Tabernacles) pictured the gathering of all the elect of God into Christ's kingdom.

Leviticus 23:34 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. **36** 'For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. *It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.*

So Christ's work of re-creation was celebrated on the 1st day of the week. **What a beautiful picture!**

Long After Christ the Sabbath was on Sunday

1. Ignatius – the most ancient church father, probably a contemporary of John said: Let everyone that loves Christ keep holy the 1st day of the week, the Lord's Day. While we must obey God every day of the week, we are especially called to keep the Sabbath holy.

Justin Martyr, in his Apologetics 2, explained that the Lord's Day was Sunday, and that it was called the Christian Sabbath. Another time he explained "Christians

met together in one place, and read the Scriptures, and prayed together, and administered the ordinance of the supper; and this, he adds, was the first day in which God created the World, and our Saviour Jesus Christ rose from the dead.”

Tertullian (The Chaplet, p3) – “On the Lord’s Day we deem it wrong to fast.”

He was referring to Sunday.

Irenaeus, Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen also stated Sunday was the Christian Sabbath.

2. Those who hold to Saturday are legalists – holding to the letter and not the spirit of the law.

They are also denying the indirect command and examples of Christ and his Apostles.

Conclusion:

While the Sabbath started on Saturday, in preparation for a change of the Sabbath to Sunday, the 3 annual feasts which pictured the work of Jesus and the results of the works of Jesus were celebrated on Sundays. The Lord was raised from the dead on Sunday. He met with his disciples on Sundays after his resurrection. The Holy Spirit came on Sunday. The Apostles and early church met each Sunday for worship. Even history confirms this. (And in a way, it is a return to the 1st day of the week – man’s first day of the week – which was the first Sabbath!)

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. We do have the right day. The Sabbath is not Saturday but Sunday. **But having the right day for the Sabbath is not enough.**

2. Love the Sabbath and the Lord of the Sabbath. Reflect on Christ’s work in saving you on the cross and giving you new life.

Reflect on the time when your salvation will be completed and you will rest forever in the presence of the Lord. Don’t see it as a restriction from getting things done.

Learn God’s Word. Learn of your salvation and sanctification.

3. Love the Sabbath (and the Lord of the Sabbath) and make it the most productive day of the week. Work for God. Do good for your neighbor. Worship him. Bring others to worship him.

Finally, the Sabbath was a picture eternal rest. Do you want it? God gives it for free if you ask him to count Christ’s suffering on the cross as yours. If you do, you will become God’s child forever and be able to enter his presence – his eternal rest.