

Sabbath or Sunday?

by Sebastian R Fama

Should Christians worship on the Sabbath (Saturday) as the Jews were instructed to do (Exodus 20:19), or should they worship on Sunday, as the early Christians did (Acts 20:7)? The Jews of the Old Testament were bound by the dictates of the Old Covenant. But when Jesus came, He established a New Covenant. Under the New Covenant many things would change. For example, baptism would replace circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12), divorce would no longer be permitted (Mark 10:2-12), and animals would no longer need to be sacrificed (Hebrews 9:1-14). The day of worship would also change.

While the New Testament does not explicitly command Christians to meet and worship on Sunday, it seems to indicate that such was the practice. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 16:2 we read: "**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 contributions need not be made when I come." And in Acts 20:7 we see that the early Christians gathered to break bread on Sunday. "**On the first day of the week**, when we were gathered together **to break bread**, Paul talked with them..." The term "to break bread" refers to the Eucharistic celebration or the Mass.

One thing the New Testament is clear on is that Christians are not to be judged for not observing the Jewish Sabbaths and feast days. "...having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross... Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a **festival or a new moon or a Sabbath**." (Colossians 2:14-16). And that is because: "When there is a change in the priesthood [Jesus], there is necessarily a change in the law" (Hebrews 7:12).

Paul considers adherence to the Jewish days of observance as possible evidence that the Galatians have strayed from the faith. He writes: "but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have labored over you in vain" (Galatians 4:9-11). Paul says this because Christians are no longer bound by the Jewish ceremonial law (Romans 6:14).

Ignatius of Antioch was a contemporary of the apostles. He wrote: "[T]hose who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e., Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, **no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day...**" (*Letter to the Magnesians* 8 [A.D. 110]). Thus, from the beginning, Christians worshiped on the Lord's Day (Sunday). And they should continue to do so.