**On The First Day Of The Week**

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday February 18th, 2024

Text: Luke 24:1; Acts 20:7 Scripture Reading: John 20:1, 19

1. **Intro: The phrase, “First Day of the Week”**
   1. Sometimes saints are asked why we don’t keep the Sabbath.
   2. Often we are told it was a Catholic Church conspiracy to change the Sabbath to Sunday.
   3. Our answer is because under the New Covenant (bought in Christ’s blood - Luke 22:19-20) we meet on Sunday, the first day of the week.
   4. This lesson will attempt to answer the “Why?” we assemble on the first day of the week.
   5. The phrase, “First Day of the Week”…
   6. The word *sabbaton (G4521),* the Greek transliteration of the *Hebrew shabbat (H7676),* appears 68 times in the Greek New Testament.
2. Sixty of those times, it is translated “Sabbath” or “Sabbath Day,” as in…
3. Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath *[G4521 sabbaton σάββασιν],* will not lay hold of it and lift it out?” **Matthew 12:11**
4. In Greek, the prepositions and parts of speech are indicated by various endings added to the nouns, which is why the beginning of the word looks the same, but the end will vary from instance to instance.
   1. Eight of those times, however, it is translated differently:
   2. Now after the Sabbath *[G4521 sabbaton σαββάτων],* as the first day of the week *[eis mian sabbaton (G4521) εις μίαν σαββάτων]* began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. Matthew 28:1 (NKJV)
   3. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week *[mias sabbaton (G4521) μιας σαββάτων],* they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. Mark 16:2 (NKJV)
   4. ‘I fast twice a week *[dis sabbaton (G4521) δὶς του σαββάτου];* I give tithes of all that I possess.’ Luke 18:12 (NKJV)
   5. Now on the first day of the week *[mia ton sabbaton (G4521) μια των σαββάτων],* 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 (NKJV)
   6. Now on the first day of the week *[mia ton sabbaton (G4521) μια των σαββάτων]* 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)
   7. Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week *[mia ton sabbaton (G4521) μια των σαββάτων],* 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.” John 20:19 (NKJV)
   8. Now on the first day of the week *[mia ton sabbaton (G4521) μια των σαββάτων],* when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. Acts 20:7 (NKJV)
   9. On the first day of the week *[mian sabbaton (G4521) μίαν σαββάτων]* let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. I Corinthians 16:2 (NKJV)
   10. In each case, where the Greek word *sabbaton (G4521)* or its variant appears with *heis (G1520)* as in the NASB, or *mia (G3391)* as in the KJV/NKJV, the Greek ordinal for one, the translators have chosen to translate *sabbaton* as “week” instead of “Sabbath,” as the evidence in the rest of the New Testament clearly indicates it means.
5. **What does *“Mia Ton Sabbaton”* mean? (or, *“Heis Sabbaton”)*** 
   1. Those who advocate that Christians are to meet on the Sabbath and not on Sunday often point to this phrase in the Greek, “mia ton sabbaton” and say it means “one Sabbath” or “the Sabbath.”
   2. The pagans all had names for the days which indicated which pagan god was to be venerated on that day. Our Gregorian Calendar is rooted in Roman gods’ names (in Old English)
      1. Sunday (Solis): Named after the sun (then considered a planet), associated with the Roman god Sol. (In many languages, Sunday directly refers to the sun.)
      2. Monday (Lunae): Named after the moon, associated with the Roman goddess Luna. (Old English name for Monday was “Monandæg”)
      3. Tuesday (Martis): Named after the god Mars, who was associated with warfare. (Old English word “Tiwesdæg,” was Germanic for “Tiw’s Day”, equals Mars)
      4. Wednesday (Mercurii): Named after the god Mercury, known for eloquence, travel, and guardianship of the dead. (Old English for “Wodnesdæg,” for “Wodin’s Day” for Odin who shared traits with Mercury)
      5. Thursday (Iovis): Named after the god Jupiter (also known as Jove), associated with thunder. (Old English was called “Þūnresdæg,” honoring the god Thunor, akin to Jupiter)
      6. Friday (Veneris): Named after the goddess Venus, associated with love and beauty. (Old English for “Frīgedæg,” honoring the goddess Frigg (similar to Venus), who held sway over marriage and domestic life)
      7. Saturday (Saturni): Named after the god Saturn, linked to agriculture and time. (Old English for “Sæternesdæg,” paying homage to Saturn’s influence)
   3. A simple explanation is that *mia ton sabbaton* is a Hebrew idiom (transliterated in Greek)
      1. The Hebrews did not name the name of pagan gods from their lips, in accordance with the Torah command (Exodus 23:13).
      2. The days of the week were called by their relation to the Sabbath.
      3. So if the first day of the week was meant, they would say, One day from the Sabbath. If the second day of the week was meant, they would say, two days from the Sabbath, and so on.
   4. The Hebrew word for “week” appears 4 times in the O.T and the word for “weeks” appears 15 times.
      1. In both cases, the singular and the plural is the same Hebrew word (19 times total in O.T.), *H7620 shâbûa‛ shâbûa‛ shebû‛âh [shaw-boo'-ah, shaw-boo'-ah, sheb-oo-aw']:* literally sevened, that is, a week (specifically of years): - seven, week.
      2. “Week” meant “Seven”
   5. The Greek words *mia & heis* are commonly translated as “one.”
      1. It is a cardinal word and therefore can be translated as “one” or “first.” The Greek word *ta* and the ending of *sabbaton* are plural genitives. That is, they are plural possessives implying ownership.
   6. Normally, the Greek word *sabbaton* is translated as “Sabbath.” But its general meaning is “sevens” or “weeks.”
      1. It is important to note that the Greeks did not have separate words for the individual days of the week.
      2. The term *sabbaton* simply referred to sevens and was often used to refer to the seventh day of the week.
      3. It should also be noted that M. Vincent states, “The noun ‘Sabbath’ is often used after numerals in the signification of ‘a week.'” (*M. Vincent, Vincent’s Word Studies of the New Testament. MacDonald Publishing Co. Vol. 1, p. 558)*
   7. Therefore, if we put all of this together, these passages should be correctly translated as “the first of the sevens,” or “first of the week,” and not “one Sabbath.”
   8. The weight of the Greek authorities and the major Bible translations (including the Latin Vulgate, ca. A.D. 400’s) are consistent. The early Christians gathered together on the first of the week: Sunday.
6. **The Significance of the “First Day of the Week”**
   1. Jesus Christ rose from the dead (“according to the Scriptures” – I Corinthians 15:3-4) on the first day of the week.
      1. “Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.” Matthew 28:1 (NASB)
      2. “When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him. Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.” Mark 16:1-2 (NASB)
      3. “Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.” Luke 23:56-24:1 (NASB)
      4. “Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.” John 20:1 (NASB)
      5. Matthew, Mark and Luke made a point to differentiate between the Sabbath and the first day of the week, even though both “Sabbath” and “week” in the Greek is the same word, *sabbaton (G4521),* and showed that it was when the Sabbath was over, so it can’t be the same thing!
   2. The church was established on the day of Pentecost, which was the Feast of Weeks, or also called the Feast of Harvest, which also fell on the first day of the week.
      1. “And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.” Acts 1:26-2:1 (NASB)
      2. The word “Pentecost” *(G4005)* is a Greek word signifying the 50th part of a thing, or the 50th in order.
      3. It appears 3 times in the N.T. (Acts 2:1; 20:16; I Corinthians 16:8)
      4. Among the Jews it was applied to one of their three great feasts which began on the 50th day after the Sabbath during Passover (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21: “fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath”; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 16:9-11) and as such would fall on the first day of the week where they would present the “first fruits of their labor” to God.
   3. The brethren (church) at Troas (Acts 20:5-6) came together to break bread on the first day of the week.
      1. “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.” Acts 20:7 (NASB)
      2. After the Passover in Philippi, Paul sailed to Troas in 5 days and stayed 7 days, till the first day of the week (Acts 20:5-7), which means he arrived very late Sunday night or early Monday morning of the previous week.
         1. Why did it take 5 days to sail from Philippi to Troas? We don’t know, only that it is possible to do it in much less time.
         2. They crossed the Aegean Sea. Paul, when he crossed it on a former occasion, did it in two days (Acts 16:11-12) in reverse, from Troas to Philippi.
      3. Paul was in a hurry to arrive in Jerusalem, if at all possible, by Pentecost (Acts 20:16).
      4. Why did he wait 7 days in Troas? It appears it was for this assembly and to break bread with the disciples there.
      5. Many people have assumed Jewish time-telling here, but there is nothing in history to suggest it, since this was a very Greek city, and thus a Roman province, most likely keeping time as the Romans did.
      6. Troas was a city of Phrygia or Mysia, on the Hellespont, between Troy north, and Assos south. It was in the country of the Trojans, the province where the ancient city of Troy had stood, and about 10 miles from the ruins of Troy. This region was much celebrated in the early periods of Grecian history. It was here that the events recorded in *The Iliad* of Homer are supposed to have occurred. The city of Troy has long since been completely destroyed.
      7. Troas is several times mentioned in the New Testament, and Paul visited here at least 3 times (Acts 16:8, 16:11; 20:5-6; II Corinthians 2:12; II Timothy 4:13)
      8. We don’t read of a synagogue in Troas, which generally means a small population of Jews there.
      9. NOTE: A Sabbath day passed by while Paul waited for the first day of the week, and he was silent about keeping the Sabbath day!
   4. Paul instructed the church at Corinth to take up their collection on the first day of the week.
      1. “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.” I Corinthians 16:1-2 (NASB)
      2. The context of this is the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30) and the Corinthian saints would need reminding again to fulfill their promise for relief (II Corinthians 8-9).
      3. However, it sets a pattern as it does for the “churches of Galatia” (I Cor. 16:1).
      4. There are also other passages in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians that indicate they assembled on the first day of the week.
      5. In the matter of the Lord’s Supper:
         1. “For, in the first place, when you come together as a church…” I Corinthians 11:18 (NASB)
         2. He mentions them meeting together 5 times (I Cor. 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34)
      6. In the matter of the use of Spiritual Gifts in a 1st c. Assembly:
         1. “What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” I Corinthians 14:26 (NASB)
         2. He mentions them assembling together 2 times (I Cor. 14:23, 26)
      7. When “meet together” of I Cor. 11 and “assemble together” of I Cor. 14 combines with the instruction of taking up the collection on “the first day of every week” of I Cor. 16 we get a picture of what day they met and assembled together!
   5. Secular writings indicated Sunday was the day the early church met together to worship
      1. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) in his 1 Apologetics CHAP. LXVII.—WEEKLY WORSHIP OF THE CHRISTIANS, wrote:
         1. “And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost. And on the day called Sunday,
         2. (1) all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability,
         3. (2) and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given,
         4. (3) and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”
         5. Justin Martyr, born the same year historians place the death of the Apostle John (AD 100), was writing within 50 years of the last apostle and describes the worship offered by the early Christians on Sunday to God.
      2. Tertullian, full name: Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (A.D. 155-220). He wrote in his “De orat,” xxiii; cf. “Ad nation.”, I, xiii; “Apologies”, xvi:
         1. “We celebrate Sunday as a joyful day. We, however (just as tradition has taught us), on the day of the Lord's Resurrection ought to guard not only against kneeling, but every posture and office of solicitude, deferring even our businesses lest we give any place to the devil.”
         2. He is credited with the first reference to a “Sunday rest.” Long before the Catholics came along. However, they built upon this idea.
   6. NOT a Catholic (ca. A.D. 600’s) conspiracy to change the Sabbath to Sunday!
   7. The point is in a very short time after the apostles the church was meeting on Sunday, which is consistent with the N.T. pattern and the significance on the first day of the week in the N.T.!
7. **Why Don’t Christians Keep the Sabbath?**
   1. The Sabbath was not a universal rule or command for all peoples (Gentiles included) but to the Jews!
      1. Exodus 16:23-29: The first time the command to observe the Sabbath given to the Israelites – It was new to them and they had to be told how to keep it!
      2. Exodus 20:8-11: The Sabbath is to be kept as holy and is the 4th Command of the Ten Commandments.
      3. Numbers 15:32-36: The first time the consequence for breaking the Sabbath was given: Death sentence. Stoned to death.
      4. Deuteronomy 5:15: The Sabbath observance was given to the Jews as a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage – Not to all mankind since creation!
      5. Exodus 31:12-17; Ezekiel 20:10-12: A sign between God and Israel!
      6. Deuteronomy 5:2-3, 12: A special law for the fleshly descendants of Jacob.
      7. Nehemiah 9:13-14: The Sabbath was not revealed until the Law was given by Moses to Israel at Sinai. This was acknowledged by Nehemiah!
   2. But wasn’t the Sabbath “forever” and “perpetual” according to Exodus 31:16-17?
      1. “Forever” and “perpetual” are the words used about the Sabbath Day in Exodus 31:16-17.
      2. Exodus 31:12-17 uses those words and says they are a “sign” and “covenant” with Israel.
      3. “Forever” (Deut. 18:5) and “perpetual” (Num. 25:13) also refer to the Levitical priesthood but Hebrews 7:11-12 says when the priesthood changed, there necessitated a change in Law (Jesus Christ is the High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek, not Levi!)
      4. Forever & perpetual can also mean to the end of the age or until a thing is fulfilled or no longer necessary. Certainly we see that with the priesthood!
   3. There is NO distinction in the Law of God and the Law of Moses (as some try to explain away)
      1. II Chron 31:3; 34:14; Ezra 7:6; Nehemiah 8:1-3, 8-9; Mark 7:10; Luke 2:22-24 *(quotes from Lev. 12:6-8):* The Bible makes no distinction between the two. They are one and the same law.
      2. God gave the law of Moses and Moses gave the law of God.
      3. Moses was only the law giver (John 1:17). It was all God’s law! (Nehemiah 8:1, 8)
      4. Moses was simply carrying out the wishes of God (Nehemiah 8:14)
   4. The apostle Paul went into the Synagogues on the Sabbath in order to teach the gospel of Christ, not to honor the Sabbath Day (Acts 13:13-52; 17:2-3; 18:4-7), for this is where he would find both Jews & Gentiles!
   5. The Sabbath Day was given to the Jews as part of their special covenant with God!
8. **Conclusion: The Old Covenant Has Been Done Away in Christ**
   1. The Old Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments, was made at the time the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt (I Kings 8:9, 21)
      1. Deuteronomy 4:13: “So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.”
   2. The Old Covenant Has Been Done Away in Christ!
   3. What does the New Testament say about these commandments which were written on “two tablets of stone?”
      1. II Corinthians 3:6-14: Underscore the words “engraved on stones”; “passing away”; “taken away in Christ.”
      2. Paul told the Ephesians:
      3. Ephesians 2:15-16: “…having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”
   4. Jeremiah prophesied about the change in covenants – Jeremiah 31:31-34
   5. Jesus said the New Covenant was in His blood – Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20
   6. The writer of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 and makes the case that the Old Covenant has been done away with and now there is a New Covenant in Hebrews 8:7-13
      1. When the priesthood changed, there necessitated a change in Law (Hebrews 7:11-12) despite the Levitical priesthood being “forever” (Deut. 18:5) and “perpetual” (Num. 25:13)!
      2. Hebrews chapters 9-10:18 quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 in parts to again make the case that the Old Covenant was fulfilled and done away with, and Jesus instituted a better covenant with better promises! (Heb. 7:22; 8:6; 12:24)
   7. We, today, are reconciled to God in the New Testament church which was made possible by the death of Christ on the cross, when we obey the gospel (Colossians 2:11-14)
   8. Paul said no one is to judge you in festivals or the Sabbath Day – Colossians 2:16-17
      1. Remember, the consequence for not keeping the Sabbath Day was death under the Law of Moses/the Lord (Numbers 15:32-36).
      2. Paul would be crazy to say no one can judge someone in regards to the Sabbath if it was still in force!
      3. Those of us who are “in Christ” do not need to, nor should we desire to, return to the inferior shadows of the Old Law!
   9. The Sabbath Day served its purpose and then was taken out of the way.
      1. To observe (or keep) part of the Old Law makes us guilty of the whole Law! (Galatians 3:10; James 2:10)
      2. To observe the Sabbath Day one must:
         1. Rest! The Sabbath was a day of rest -- Exodus 35:1-3
         2. Offer a burnt offering -- Numbers 28:9-10
         3. Restrict their travel -- Exodus 16:29
      3. The penalty for violating the Sabbath law: Stoning! -- Numbers 15:32-36
   10. Under the New Covenant in Jesus’ blood (Luke 22:20) 9 out of the 10 Commandments are repeated, but the Sabbath Day is not one of them!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Old Covenant** | **New Covenant** |
| *Exodus 20:3-17* | *Hebrews 8:6-13* |
| 1. No other gods | 1. Acts 14:15-17; I Thess. 1:9; |
| 1. No idols | 1. Acts 17; I Cor. 6:9; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:21 |
| 1. Don’t take the Lord’s name in vain | 1. Mt. 6:9; James 5:12 |
| 1. Keep the Sabbath Day holy |  |
| 1. Honor father & mother | 1. Eph. 6:1-2 |
| 1. Do not murder | 1. Rom. 13:9; Rev. 21:8 |
| 1. Do not commit adultery | 1. Rom. 13:9; I Cor. 6:9 |
| 1. Do not steal | 1. Rom. 13:9; I Cor. 6:10; Eph. 4:26 |
| 1. Do not bear false witness | 1. Col. 3:9; Rev. 21:8 |
| 1. Do not covet | 1. Rom. 13:9; I Cor. 6:10; Col. 3:5 |

* + 1. When the apostles and elders at the church of Jerusalem wrote a letter to the Gentile converts to comfort them from the Judaizers, men “to whom we gave no instruction,” they did not tell them to keep the Sabbath! (Acts 15:22-31)
    2. Sabbath-Keeping belonged to the Jewish Age – if in the New Covenant, what are the consequences for not keeping it?
  1. The Hebrew writer, speaking of Jesus (Hebrews 7:24) said, “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.” (Hebrews 8:6)
  2. We are no longer under the Old Covenant but under the New Covenant in Christ’s blood (Luke 22:20), the law of Christ (I Cor. 9:21), also called the Law of Liberty (James 1:25; 2:12)!
  3. We are under a better Covenant with better promises initiated by a better Mediator and thus, we assemble on the first day of the week, commemorating Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and the establishment of His church!
  4. If not a Christian, you can become a member of the saved body, and be washed in the blood of the Lamb!
  5. If a Christian in error, remember the blessings of being a part of His family; Repent!
  6. Whatever your requests, let them be made known NOW while we stand & sing!

**References:**

* + 1. Verlyn D. Verbrugge*. Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Zondervan. 2000. , 512.
    2. Louw & Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. United Bible Societies. 1989. vol. 1, p. 651.
    3. H. G. Liddell and R. Scott. *Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford Press. 1996. p. 1579.
    4. J. H. Thayer. *The New Testament Greek-English Lexicon*. Christian Copyrights Inc. p. 565.
    5. Danker and Bauer*. Greek-English Lexicon*. University Chicago Press. 1979., p. 910.
    6. Kittel and Bromiley. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1971. Vol. 1, p. 6.
    7. M. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies of the New Testament*. MacDonald Publishing Co. Vol. 1, p. 558.
    8. W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*. 1990., vol. 2., p. 424.
    9. T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Baker Publishing Co. 1930., vol. 3, p. 338-339.
    10. R. C. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament*. Hendrickson Publishers. 1998., p. 826.
    11. [*https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14335a.htm*](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14335a.htm)
    12. <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/what-does-mia-ton-sabbaton-mean/>
    13. <https://theconversation.com/explainer-the-gods-behind-the-days-of-the-week-87170>