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**Did The Early Church Worship On Saturday (7th day of the week),
Or on Sunday (1st day of the week)**

There is much confusion among believers as to which day of the week the early church met to worship God. I've been often condemned for 'buying into' what many people believe to be the Roman Catholic Sabbath, better known as Sunday. I do not 'buy into' anything, or embrace anything without first studying it.

The pope may have legalized Sunday as the "new Sabbath". However, he did not start this trend. I have said it many times, that if you give a monkey a typewriter, he will eventually type a word - give a pope a Bible, and he will eventually stumble over a truth and try to canonize it.

There is something that most people do not realize, and that is, that the church met in the first and second centuries on both Saturday (the 7th day of the week), and on Sunday (the 1st day of the week). The reason; On Saturday, the apostles would find the religious Jews with their leaders, the Pharisees, in the synagogue on their Sabbath (Saturday). All church historians will tell you that the early Christians reserved the 1st day of the week (Sunday), as a special day when all believers met together to preach and to feast on the Word of God. This is not merely a fact of church history. The scripture is the final proof:

Acts 20:7 - "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, and continued his speech until midnight."

The reason that they set up the 1st day of the week for meeting in their homes (from house to house) is because Jesus rose from the dead on the 1st day of the week. This 'house to house' fellowship on Sunday began in Acts 2:44-46:

Acts 2:44-46 - And all that believed were together, and had all things common; (45) and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. (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."

Luke 24:1, 2, 21 - "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. "- today is the third day since these things (concerning Jesus' crucifixion) were done (this 1st day of the week was the day on which Jesus said He would rise from the dead).

Jesus emphasized this meeting day, putting his approval on this special day by meeting with his apostles for fellowship immediately after his resurrection.

John 20:19 – “Then the same day of the evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith to them, peace be unto you.”

This first day of the week Jesus revealed himself to them, showing the wounds in his hands and side (verse 20). This day he sends them forth as his preachers (verse 21- “even so I send you”). This day (Sunday), they received the ability to understand the truth – the Holy Spirit (verse 22). This is also the day in which Jesus gave them the power of remitting (forgiving sins to those who repented) sins (John 20:23).

It is no wonder that the apostles set aside this day as their day of fellowship and preaching. It was, after all, their first day of meeting with him after his death and resurrection. It was also the day that they received the Holy Spirit.

This day of his resurrection was the day that Jesus met and preached to His apostles:

Luke 24:27 – “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Jesus preached on Sunday, the day of his resurrection.

Paul points to this first day of the week (Sunday), as the day in which the church would be gathered together in order for the believers to give their financial support in offerings to the church:

1 Cor. 16:2 – “Upon the first day of the week (Sunday), let every one of you (a gathering of all believers) lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

Jesus and the apostles preached on the Sabbath. It was the day of fellowship, feasting, and preaching. The first day of the week (Sunday) was never intended to take the place of the Old Testament Sabbath. It was of a completely different institution. It was the meeting day in scripture of New Testament believers to commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This weekly feast began in the first century to take on another title. The church historians tell us that it was called the “Agape love feast”, or, “The feast of charity”.

2 Peter 2:13 – (speaking of evil men – natural brute beast, made to be taken and destroyed) – “Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you.”

The parallel chapter of 2 Peter is the book of Jude (which is one chapter long).

Jude 12 – “These are spots in your feasts of charity (agape), when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear...”

The following is a church history account of this feast of charity, held in a home on “the first day of the week”:

(From: McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature):

The mode of celebrating the feast was simple. The bishop or presbyter presided. The food appears, to have been either dressed at the houses of the guests, or to have been prepared at the place of meeting, according to circumstances. Before eating, the guests washed their hands, and prayer was offered. The Scriptures were read, (I remind you that this was on a Sunday) and questions proposed by the person presiding. Then followed the recital of accounts respecting the affairs of other churches, such accounts being regularly transmitted from one church to another, so that a deep sympathy was produced; and, in many cases, assistance was furnished to churches in trouble. At the close of the feast, money was collected for orphans and widows, for the poor, and for prisoners. The kiss of charity was given, and the ceremony concluded with prayer (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14).

Rom 16:16 - Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

1 Cor 16:20 - All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

1 Thess 5:26 - Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

1 Peter 5:14 - Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Church historian, Williston Walker, says that this common meal of breaking bread (on Sunday) served a two-fold purpose. It was a bond of both fellowship, and a means of support for the needy. The support of the less well to do was provided the gifts of the better able, so that they “had all things common”. This meal was an occasion for offerings of the needy.

Until the second century, Christians were not permitted to erect churches, but were compelled to worship in private houses, in open fields, or to escape persecution, met in the catacombs and other concealed places. Upon the suspension of persecution from A.D. 202 and forwards, we find notices of church edifices in Nicomedia, Edessa (Odessa), and other cities.

The church began meeting on the first day of the week (Sunday) from house to house in the 2nd chapter of Acts, and when church buildings were permitted in the 3rd century (long before Roman Catholicism’s founding), the common meal, or agape love feast of the first day of the week, was moved into the church buildings. This is a picture of the evolutionary process of meeting on Sunday.

Paul spoke of this agape love feast for fellowship as a time to give support for the poor. It is commonly reported by most historians that there began to be an abuse of this feast. Some of the Christians who gathered, began to drink all the drinks and eat all of the food

at this Sunday feast. Paul indicts these believers for their in consideration in 1 Cor. 11:21,22:

21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. (Paul is saying that one eats everything he has brought to this 1st day feast, while those who have nothing, probably the poor, go hungry, and one drinks so much that he is drunk)

22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

Paul is saying we didn't come here to stuff and glut ourselves; we can do that in our homes. This weekly Sunday (1st day) Charity Meal is a time of fellowship and refreshment – not a time and place to deprive the poor. This was one of the primary reasons for the institution of this meal to begin with.

This is why Paul makes the following statement in verse 33:

1 Cor 11:33 - Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

“Tarry” is the Greek word *ekdechomai*, meaning to accept from some source, to await or wait for.

The historians tell us that those who were gluttoning and making pigs of themselves were not waiting for the poor to get there so they could offer them food. Paul is saying await and tarry till everyone expected is there before you begin to eat. Eat moderately and drink very little. Leave some food, not only for the poor to eat, but also that there may be plenty left for them to carry home. This is the reason for Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 11:34:

1 Cor 11:34-12:1 – “And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.”

Paul is saying, that if you are hungry after the feast, because you gave most of the food to the poor, then go home and eat so that you are not condemned for your actions in your lack of charity to the poor.

It is a biblically established fact that the early church met on the first day of the week for fellowship, a meal, and compassion to the poor, as well as the reading of scripture, and the preaching of the gospel. This was the whole reason for meeting on the 1st day (Sunday), to read the scriptures and to take care of the poor. Sunday was never intended to “take the place” of the Old Testament Sabbath. It had a totally different purpose.

The apostles also went into the synagogue on the Sabbath to preach the gospel. The reason is obvious: They would find the Pharisees and devout Jews there for their Sabbath

rituals. These were the men who would become enraged with the apostle's message and attempt to kill them (few would be converted).

Acts 13:14 – (speaking of Paul and Barnabas) “But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down” (then Paul stood up and preached on this Sabbath (verse 16) and the Jews invited him back the next Sabbath).

Acts 13:44 – “*And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.*”

The Word was always preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Acts 15:21 – “*For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.*”

Acts 16:13 – “*And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.*” (Lydia was converted here)

Acts 17:2 – “*And Paul, as his manner was ('manner' is the Greek word, 'etho', meaning to be used by habit or custom – it was not a requirement to preach on the Sabbath, but Paul's custom to catch the Jews), went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,*”

Acts 18:4 – (speaking of Paul) “*And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.*”

If you will notice, it is not in the Old Testament temple that Paul is preaching on the Sabbath, but rather, the Babylonian synagogue. The synagogue began in the captivity in Babylon – the synagogue was not commanded in the Law. It was a tradition of the Rabbis, not a part of the Law. Therefore, when Paul was preaching in the synagogue, he was not keeping the Sabbath day by performing any of the Law on the Sabbath. He was merely using the Sabbath as a means to reach Jews. When it was his custom (Acts 17:2) to reason and persuade Jews to Christianity (Acts 18:4) on the Sabbath, this custom of Paul had nothing to do with keeping the Sabbath under Jewish Law.

Paul says that the rituals of the Sabbath were blotted out and what remains now is the spiritual Sabbath, which is every day.

Col 2:14 – “*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*”

Col 2:16 – “*Let no man therefore judge you (by the rituals of the Law) in meat, or in drink (dietary laws of the Jews), or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon (1st day of the month festival), or of the Sabbath days;*”

Col 2:17 – "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

Paul is saying that the Old Testament rituals, of which is the Sabbath, were a shadow – they were not the real thing. The real thing is the spiritual – the literal has been blotted out. Now the Sabbath, which is spiritual, is every day.

You can see then, how the early church, they worshiped on Saturday (7th day of the week), and on Sunday (1st day of the week). This is not merely church history. We have documented this from scripture.

Later on, the church began to meet on Wednesdays and Fridays as well. This brought the church to meeting four days a week (Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday). At some places, for those who had the time in their lives, they went from house to house daily.

I'm quite sure that when we get to the judgment, God is not going to say, "You just met too many days a week in My name. I only wanted you to meet and fellowship for one day". We are to meet and fellowship every day possible.

In my next letter I will address the daily spiritual Sabbath. Note: Sabbath does not mean 'seventh', but rather, 'rest'.

END
