

THE SABBATH

“on the first day of the week”

Key question

What is the Scripture’s teaching on the Sabbath?

Key text

Romans 14:5

“One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike.
Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.”

Key Definition

Sabbath

The Sabbath refers to the seventh day of the week, which was to be set aside under the Mosaic Law as a day of rest. It came to be identified with the state of the believer’s posture before God where acceptance was based on faith not works.

Introduction

1. The Sabbath doctrine is significant in that it becomes a test case for the believer’s relationship with the Law of Moses.
 2. There are three common views held by Christians.
- A. **Sabbath position, the seventh day holy.**
1. The position stated - “The Sabbath is the memorial of an immutable historical fact - a finished creation and the Creator’s rest on the specific seventh day at the close of creation week. We believe that nothing - no person or group, or power on earth - can change the commemorative, historical fact that God rested on the seventh day of creation week and gave His rest day to mankind as the perpetual memorial-reminder of a finished work- never repealed, and never to be repealed.” Seventh-day Adventist
 2. The position defended
 - a. God ordained the Sabbath in creation. Gen.2:2-3; Ex.20:8-11 “8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and

all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”

1. The Sabbath institution was part of God’s original plan for humanity before sin entered the world.
2. Sabbath observance is intended for everyone for it was given before the call of Israel.
3. The Sabbath is not an institution but a specific day (the seventh day of the week - Saturday) so ordained for all time.
4. The Sabbath was observed before the giving of the Law.

Ex.16:23 “then he said to them, “This is what the Lord meant; Tomorrow is a Sabbath observance, a holy Sabbath to the Lord, bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.””

- b. The Sabbath is an essential part of the moral law. Ex.20:8-11 (Ex.31:16-17; Deut.5:12-15)
- c. Sabbath observance was important through Israel’s history B.C.
 1. Violation resulted in death. Num.15:32-35; Ex.31:12-17; 35:2 “whoever does any work on it (Sabbath) shall be put to death”; 16:22-26; Neh.10:3, 13:15-21; Lev.25:4; II Chron.36:21).
 2. Israel’s exile was punishment for breaking the Sabbath. Ezek.20:13,16,21,24; Jer.17:21-27; Neh.13:15-22
 3. The Sabbath’s (Lev.26:2) included special days in addition to Saturday. Lev.16:29-31; 23:24,38,39
- d. Jesus observed the Sabbath. Luke 4:16 while challenging the man-made traditions that had grown to surround it (Matt.12:1-14, Mark 2:23-3:6, Luke 6:1-11, John 5:1-18).
 1. Jesus did not break the Sabbath only the human traditions surrounding the Sabbath. Matt.12:9-14
 2. Jesus made it clear that He expected His followers to keep Sabbath after His departure and up through His return. **Matt.24:20** “But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.”
- e. The apostles practiced Sabbath observance.
 1. There is no indication that they were ever accused of breaking the Sabbath by the Jews who were looking for excuses to discredit them.
 2. NOTE: In both I Cor.16:1-3 and Acts 20:7-12, we find that the first day of the week is mentioned to describe respectively a private fundraising plan and an extraordinary gathering of the Troas believers with Paul. The “Lord’s day” of Rev.1:10 is best understood as a reference to the day of judgment.
- f. Rome changed the day. (This was motivated by three forces)
 1. Anti-Judaism, which appears to have caused a widespread devaluation and repudiation of the Sabbath.
 2. The development of Sun-cults with the consequent enhancement of the day of the Sun over that of Saturn, a contingency which apparently oriented Christians toward such a day, since it provided an adequate symbolism to commemorate significant divine acts.
 3. The role that the Church of Rome played in causing the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday.

B. Sabbath-Sunday position, one day in seven holy.

1. The position stated - “The Sabbath or Lord’s Day is to be sanctified as a holy resting day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; we make it our delight to spend the whole time . . . in the public and private exercises of God’s worship.” Westminster Larger Catechism
2. The position defended
 - a. God ordained the Sabbath in creation.
 - b. The moral law commands Sabbath observance.
 - c. The New Testament changed the day of the Sabbath.
 1. Christ arose on the first day - Jn.20:19,26
 2. Sunday is called “the Lord’s Day” - Rev.1:10
 3. The apostles practiced the keeping of the first day of the week (Sunday) - Acts 20:7; I Cor.16:2
 4. Irenaeus (living in the time of the apostle John) - *“Let every one that loveth Christ keep holy the first day of the week, the Lord’s day.”*
 - d. Patristic writings show the early church’s observance of Sabbath-Sunday.
3. The argument for Sunday observance of the Sabbath offered by a representative (Ra McLaughlin) of the Reformed position is as follows:
 - a. We begin with the premise that the Bible doesn’t actually teach that we are to meet on the seventh day of the week. Rather, it teaches that we are to meet on the seventh day (without the qualification “of the week”). The Hebrew Old Testament normally uses the unqualified phrase “the seventh day” to refer to days which were not the seventh day of the month, and which could not possibly have fallen on the same day of the week from year to year (e.g. Exod.12:15,16; 13:6; Lev.23:6-8; 13:5,6,27,32,34,51; 14:9,39; Num.6:9; 7:1-48; 19:12,19; 28:17-25; 31:19,24; Deut.16:1-8; Josh.6:4,15; Judg.14:12-18; 2 Sam.12:18; 1 Kgs.20:29; Est.1:10). These uses of the phrase (by far the majority of its uses in the Old Testament) appear simply to mean “seven days later.” Moreover, there were some Sabbaths that were not on the seventh day (e.g. Lev.23:27-32,39)
 - b. Similarly, in Exodus 16 where God commanded the Israelites to observe the Sabbath in the wilderness, he indicated which day would be the Sabbath not by referring to days of the week, but by telling them to count the days on which they received manna (Exod.16:4-5,22-23). The Bible does not say that they began to receive manna on the first day of the week, but marks the time from “the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from Egypt” (Exod.16:1). We do not possess an ancient Hebrew calendar, and we do not know on which day the Sabbath fell in the wilderness. In fact, it is entirely possible that the Hebrews did not determine which day the Sabbath was by looking at the calendar to find the seventh day of the week, but instead determined the seventh day of the week by first determining when the Sabbath was.
 - c. Assessing all the occurrences of “seventh day” in the Old Testament, and looking at the institution of the Sabbath, it seems that the Old Testament does not clearly teach that the Sabbath is to be observed on the seventh day of the week -- or at least that the calendar week is not to be used to determine which day is the seventh.
 - d. In the New Testament, the Jews celebrated the Sabbath on what was generally recognized as the seventh day of the week (Matt.28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 23:56-24:1), and Jesus recognized their choice of days (e.g. Matt.12:1-13; Luke 13:14-16).

However, neither Jesus nor any other New Testament writer indicated that the Sabbath day always had to fall on the seventh day of the week as determined by any regular calendar.

- e. Based on this thinking, the New Testament church, under the guidance of the Apostles, apparently felt the freedom to change the day of observance relative to the secular calendar. They still maintained the commanded six-day-plus-one pattern, but shifted their Sabbath observance to the first day of the week relative to the secular calendar. They chose this day most probably because it was the day on which Jesus had been raised from the dead (Matt.28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). The risen Lord also chose the first day of the week on which to manifest himself to his disciples when they were gathered together (John 20:19,26). In any event, it seems that the first day of the week probably came to be known as the “Lord’s Day” (Rev.1:10), and seems to have been the day on which the church gathered with the approval of the Apostles (Acts 20:7). There does not appear to be any evidence in the New Testament that the early church felt compelled to observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, and there is some possible evidence that Paul taught that Christians were not obligated to observe that particular day (Col.2:16).
- f. In conclusion, the practice of Sunday observance is based first on the understanding that the Bible does not command observance on the seventh day of the calendar week, and second on church tradition established under the approval of the Apostles.

C. **Lord’s day position, all-days holy.**

1. The position stated - The Sabbath began at the time of Moses; it was and is a Jewish institution. Jesus transcends the Sabbath, declaring himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath’s true intentions are expressed in Jesus ministry. Hence, the Sabbath has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who has begun the reign of God’s rest in which the sabbatical vision of justice, freedom, and love are everyday mandates.
2. The position explained
 - a. The biblical Sabbath originated not with creation but at the time of Moses as a Jewish institution.
 - b. The original purposes of the Sabbath were ethical and humanitarian, ensuring social equality and rest from endless work in bondage, from which God liberated Israel. The Sabbath was the foundation of the sabbatical and jubilee years, institutions providing social equality.
 - c. Sabbath practices in later Judaism deteriorated into legalistic restrictions making fulfillment of the original purposes impossible.
 - d. Jesus broke Sabbath laws and identified his own mission with the fulfillment of the original purposes of the Sabbath. This fulfillment continues in the life of Jesus’ messianic community.
 - e. The early church regarded Jesus’ resurrection as the culmination of his salvific work; they began to meet regularly on the first day of the week to celebrate Jesus death and resurrection through the Lord’s supper. The celebration of the Lord’s supper on the first day led the church to call the first day the Lord’s day.
 - f. Though Jewish Christians continued to observe the Sabbath, Christian theology, as it developed in the context of the Gentile mission, held Sabbath-keeping to be unnecessary. The holy Sabbath of the old covenant was only a shadow of Christ; Jesus, the substance to whom the shadow pointed, has made all days holy.

- g. The promised rest of the messianic age had begun now, on Christ. As in the past, so now unbelief keeps people from entering into this Sabbath rest, which God has provided through Jesus Christ.
 - h. Only in later church history, mostly in the fourth century, did Sabbath observance become connected to the Lord's day, producing Sabbath-Sunday observance.
3. The position defended
- a. The giving of the Sabbath to Israel is connected to the exodus - **Ezek.20** "10 So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. 11 I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live. 12 Also I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them."
 - 1. It was not commanded to be kept until the time of Moses - **Ex.16:23-30**.
 - 2. There is no indication of Sabbath observance before Moses even though **Genesis 2:1-3** is thought by some to suggest such.
 - 3. **Nehemiah 9:13-14** traces the initiation of Sabbath laws to Moses (see *Romans 5:12-14*). "13 Then You came down on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, You gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. 14 So You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and laid down for them commandments, statutes and law, through Your servant Moses."
 - 4. **Exodus 31:12-17** tells us that the Sabbath was a sign for Israel (not all people). "You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you."
 - b. The Sabbath is to be treated like the Passover -
 - 1. a sign between God and the Jews.
 - 2. a memorial to their deliverance out of Egypt.
 - 3. points forward to Christ.
 - 4. has met their anti-type in Christ.
 - 5. has passed away.
 - c. Jesus frequently violated the Sabbath law, which proscribed any kind of work. Mk.3:1ff.; Lk.13:10ff.; 14:1ff.; Jn.5:1ff.; 9:1ff.
 - d. It may be concluded that the change in days of special worship from Saturday to Sunday parallels and symbolizes a change in covenants.
 - e. After Pentecost (Acts & Epistles) there is no indication that the Sabbath code of the old covenant was binding upon the church.
 - 1. The Mosaic law had ceased.

II Cor.3:7-14 "But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading {as} it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses {it.} For if that which fades away {was} with glory, much more that which remains {is} in glory. . ."
 - 2. There was freedom with respect to special days of worship.

Rom.14:5-8 “⁵ One man regards one day above another, another regards every day {alike.} Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.”

- Does this Sabbath refer to the weekly observance (Saturday) or only to special days of worship (for example Lev.16:29-31)? There is no sure way of knowing although it really makes no difference in that all Sabbaths were to be obeyed (Lev.26:2).
 - The fact that a special day of worship, which was central to the Law and Judaism, is not emphasized after Pentecost suggests that the Sabbath (Saturday) was not a big issue for the Apostles.
 - The fact that special Sabbaths were also a part of the Old Covenant instruction by God would suggest that they were to be respected if the Old Covenant was in force.
3. Sabbath laws were not to be enforced.

Col.2:16-17, “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.”

Gal.4:9-10 “You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.”

4. All but the Sabbath commandment of the “Ten Commandments” is reiterated in the epistles.
5. The true Sabbath (under grace) is a “life” not a “day.”

Hebrews 4:1-16 “¹ Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. ² For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. ³ For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “*As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,*” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh {day}, “*And God rested on the seventh day from all His works*”; ⁵ and again in this {passage}, “*They shall not enter My rest.*” ⁶ Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, “*Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.*” ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. ⁹ There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. ¹¹ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through {following} the same example of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. ¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast

our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as {we are, yet} without sin. 16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”

D. **Jesus’ treatment of the Sabbath – Mark 2:23-28.**

“23 And it came about that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to Him, "See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions: 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he gave it also to those who were with him?" 27 And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.””

1. Jesus gives two examples of where a strict interpretation of Ex.35:2 is trumped by basic common sense and human needs.
2. Jesus indicates that the Sabbath is to enhance human life not make it more difficult. This implies that there are situations that may demand exceptions to the strict interpretation of Sabbath proscriptions.
3. Jesus bears witness to his divinity by claiming to be Lord of the Sabbath. Only God could alter the Sabbath Law ordained by God – Ex.20:8-11.

E. **Sabbath is the celebration of all that is good.**

1. The creation account is dramatic in that it culminates in the Sabbath – a day of rest from work and also celebration of what is good. Many Old Testament scholars believe that the creation account is structured to showcase the Sabbath, which had become the focus of Israel’s religious system.
2. There is an important principle here. We need to regularly celebrate the goodness of God, His Creation, and His Kingdom. This should be the focus of our public worship and private devotion.
3. There also is a model in the Sabbath for how we should celebrate the goodness that we see in the lives of those around us. Parents need to celebrate the good things their children do. Husbands and wives need to celebrate the good that they see in their mates. In the lives of our church community we need to often “call a Sabbath” to celebrate the good that we see accomplished in the name of Christ. The Sabbath is a formal declaration of “and it was good.”

F. **Sunday was the day of worship in the early history of the church.**

The Didache

“But every Lord’s day . . . gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned” (*Didache* 14 A.D. 70).

The Letter of Barnabas

“We keep the eighth day [Sunday] with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead” (*Letter of Barnabas* 15:6–8 A.D. 74).

Ignatius of Antioch

“Those 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, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death” (*Letter to the Magnesians* 8 A.D. 110).

Justin Martyr

“We too would observe the fleshly circumcision, and the Sabbaths, and in short all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined on you—namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your heart. . . . How is it, Trypho, that we would not observe those rites which do not harm us—I speak of fleshly circumcision and Sabbaths and feasts? . . . God enjoined you to keep the Sabbath, and imposed on you other precepts for a sign, as I have already said, on account of your unrighteousness and that of your fathers . . .” (*Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 18, 21 A.D. 155).

“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 Savior on the same day rose from the dead” (*First Apology* 67 A.D. 155).

Tertullian

“Let him who contends that the Sabbath is still to be observed as a balm of salvation, and circumcision on the eighth day . . . teach us that, for the time past, righteous men kept the Sabbath or practiced circumcision, and were thus rendered ‘friends of God.’ For if circumcision purges a man, since God made Adam uncircumcised, why did he not circumcise him, even after his sinning, if circumcision purges? . . . Therefore, since God originated Adam uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, consequently his offspring also, Abel, offering him sacrifices, uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, was by him [God] commended [Gen.4:1–7, Heb.11:4]. . . . Noah also, uncircumcised—yes, and unobservant of the Sabbath—God freed from the deluge. For Enoch too, most righteous man, uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, he translated from this world, who did not first taste death in order that, being a candidate for eternal life, he might show us that we also may, without the burden of the law of Moses, please God” (*An Answer to the Jews* 2 A.D. 203).

The Didascalia

“The apostles further appointed: On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the holy scriptures, and the oblation sacrifice of the Mass, because on the first day of the week [i.e., Sunday] our Lord rose from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week he ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven” (*Didascalia* 2 A.D. 225).

Origen

“Hence it is not possible that the day of rest after the Sabbath should have come into existence from the seventh day of our God. On the contrary, it is our Savior who, after the pattern of his own rest, caused us to be made in the likeness of his death, and hence also of his resurrection” (*Commentary on John* 2:28 A.D. 229).

Victorinus

“The sixth day [Friday] is called *parasceve*, that is to say, the preparation of the kingdom. . . . On this day also, on account of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we make either a station to God or a fast. On the seventh day he rested from all his works, and blessed it, and sanctified it. On the former day we are accustomed to fast rigorously, that on the Lord’s day we may go forth to our bread with giving of thanks. And let the *parasceve* become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews . . . which Sabbath he [Christ] in his body abolished” (*The Creation of the World* A.D. 300).

Eusebius of Caesarea

“They [the early saints of the Old Testament] did not care about circumcision of the body, neither do we [Christians]. They did not care about observing Sabbaths, nor do we. They did not avoid certain kinds of food, neither did they regard the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to their posterity to be observed as symbols; nor do Christians of the present day do such things” (*Church History* 1:4:8 A.D. 312).

“The day of his [Christ’s] light . . . was the day of his resurrection from the dead, which they say, as being the one and only truly holy day and the Lord’s day, is better than any number of days as we ordinarily understand them, and better than the days set apart by the Mosaic law for feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths, which the apostle Paul teaches are the shadow of days and not days in reality” (*Proof of the Gospel* 4:16:186 A.D. 319).

Athanasius

“The Sabbath was the end of the first creation, the Lord’s day was the beginning of the second, in which he renewed and restored the old in the same way as he prescribed that they should formerly observe the Sabbath as a memorial of the end of the first things, so we honor the Lord’s day as being the memorial of the new creation” (*On Sabbath and Circumcision* 3 A.D. 345).

Cyril of Jerusalem

“Fall not away either into the sect of the Samaritans or into Judaism, for Jesus Christ has henceforth ransomed you. Stand aloof from all observance of Sabbaths and from calling any indifferent meats common or unclean” (*Catechetical Lectures* 4:37 A.D. 350).

Council of Laodicea

“Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the Sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord’s day and, if possible, not work on it, because they were Christians” (Canon 29 A.D. 360).

John Chrysostom

“When he [God] said, ‘You shall not kill’ . . . he did not add, ‘because murder is a wicked thing.’ The reason was that conscience had taught this beforehand, and he speaks thus, as to those who know and understand the point. Wherefore when he speaks to us of another commandment, not known to us by the dictate of conscience, he not only prohibits, but adds the reason. When, for instance, he gave commandment concerning the Sabbath— ‘On the seventh day you shall do no work’ —he subjoined also the reason for this cessation. What was this? ‘Because on the seventh day God rested from all his works which he had begun to make’ [Ex.20:10-11]. . . . For what purpose then, I ask, did he add a reason respecting the Sabbath, but did no such thing in regard to murder? Because this commandment was not one of the leading ones. It was not one of those, which were accurately defined of our conscience, but a kind of partial and temporary one, and for this reason it was abolished afterward. But those

which are necessary and uphold our life are the following: ‘You shall not kill. . . . You shall not commit adultery. . . . You shall not steal.’ On this account he adds no reason in this case, nor enters into any instruction on the matter, but is content with the bare prohibition” (*Homilies on the Statutes* 12:9 A.D. 387).

“You have put on Christ, you have become a member of the Lord and been enrolled in the heavenly city, and you still grovel in the law of Moses? How is it possible for you to obtain the kingdom? Listen to Paul’s words, that the observance of the law overthrows the gospel, and learn, if you will, how this comes to pass, and tremble, and shun this pitfall. Why do you keep the Sabbath and fast with the Jews?” (*Homilies on Galatians* 2:17 A.D. 395).

“The rite of circumcision was venerable in the Jews’ account, forasmuch as the law itself gave way thereto, and the Sabbath was less esteemed than circumcision. For that circumcision might be performed, the Sabbath was broken; but that the Sabbath might be kept, circumcision was never broken; and mark, I pray, the dispensation of God. This is found to be even more solemn than the Sabbath, as not being omitted at certain times. When then it is done away, much more is the Sabbath” (*Homilies on Philippians* 10 A.D. 402).

The Apostolic Constitutions

“And on the day of our Lord’s resurrection, which is the Lord’s day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent him to us, and condescended to let him suffer, and raised him from the dead. Otherwise what apology will he make to God who does not assemble on that day . . . in which is performed the reading of the prophets, the preaching of the gospel, the oblation of the sacrifice, the gift of the holy food” (*Apostolic Constitutions* 2:7:60 A.D. 400).

Augustine

“Well, now, I should like to be told what there is in these ten commandments, except the observance of the Sabbath, which ought not to be kept by a Christian. . . . Which of these commandments would anyone say that the Christian ought not to keep? It is possible to contend that it is not the law which was written on those two tables that the apostle [Paul] describes as ‘the letter that kills’ [II Cor.3:6], but the law of circumcision and the other sacred rites which are now abolished” (*The Spirit and the Letter* 24 A.D. 412).

Pope Gregory I

“It has come to my ears that certain men of perverse spirit have sown among you some things that are wrong and opposed to the holy faith, so as to forbid any work being done on the Sabbath day. What else can I call these [men] but preachers of Antichrist, who when he comes will cause the Sabbath day as well as the Lord’s day to be kept free from all work. For because he [the Antichrist] pretends to die and rise again, he wishes the Lord’s day to be held in reverence; and because he compels the people to Judaize that he may bring back the outward rite of the law, and subject the perfidy of the Jews to himself, he wishes the Sabbath to be observed. For this which is said by the prophet, ‘You shall bring in no burden through your gates on the Sabbath day’ [Jer.17:24] could be held to as long as it was lawful for the law to be observed according to the letter. But after that the grace of almighty God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has appeared, the commandments of the law, which were spoken figuratively cannot be kept according to the letter. For if anyone says that this about the Sabbath is to be kept, he must needs say that carnal sacrifices are to be offered. He must say too that the commandment about the circumcision of the body is still to be retained. But let him hear the apostle Paul

saying in opposition to him: 'If you be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing' [Gal. 5:2]" (*Letters* 13:1 A.D. 597).