

The Sure Word Bible Studies
Lesson 16

The First Day

In the previous lesson we learned that the Bible teaches the seventh day Sabbath is the Lord's Day, the true Sabbath. In spite of that, many churches still keep Sunday as the day of worship. Does the Bible in any way support this? To be honest in our search for truth we must look at all the biblical passages that may support the first day as the day of worship. We will begin by looking at all the texts that mention the first day –

Matthew 28:1 – *“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.”*

This text tells us the Sabbath was past. Two days are mentioned, the Sabbath and the first, drawing a distinction between the two.

Mark 16:1,2 - *“And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”*

Verse 9 *“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils”.*

Again two days are mentioned, the Sabbath and the first day. But no change is made.

Luke 23:54-56 – *“And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.*

And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.” **Luke 24:1** – *“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.”*

This text "lines up" the two days before the first day -

1. Preparation Day (Good Friday) - verse 54
2. Sabbath (Saturday) - verse 56
3. First day (Resurrection Sunday) - verse 1 of chapter 24

These were the events that the yearly "feast days" we studied in the sanctuary service pointed forward to:

1. Feast of Passover, which pointed to Christ sacrifice.
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread, which pointed Christ's burial.
3. Feast of Firstfruits, which pointed to Christ's resurrection.

Next - John 20:1 – *“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.”*

John is restating what the other gospel writers have already mentioned. But note verse 19 where he mentions a meeting held on the first day:

Now verse 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, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”*

It is clear that this was not a worship meeting. John writes they were *“assembled for fear of the Jews.”* The disciples were afraid the Jews would have them crucified too! As a matter of fact, up until that time, they did not believe Jesus had been resurrected.

Compare Mark 16:9 -11 - *“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, **when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.**”*

The disciples did not believe until they saw Him themselves later that day. The next passage that mentions the first day is in the book of Acts.

Acts 20:7-12 – *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them,*

ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.'

There are three points we need to recognize in this account.

1. It was nighttime - "*there were many lights*" - "*Paul spoke until midnight.*"
2. "*It was upon*" - or the beginning of the first day which would be a Saturday night meeting (in Bible times the days begin at sunset).
3. Breaking bread does not make it a holy day or a Sabbath. This is a Jewish term that simply meant they ate together. According to Acts 2:46, they broke bread everyday.

This was a farewell meeting for Paul. They sensed they would never see him again; this was to be his last missionary journey. In no way does this text suggest that Sunday was a holy day.

The next passage is found in I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 16:1 – 3 - "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.*"

This was not a Sunday school offering being taken up in church. Note the following points.

1. The term "*by him*" - refers to keeping it at home.
2. "*in store*" - meant it was to be put aside until Paul came to gather it. Paul was calling for a collection for the saints

suffering in the famine in Jerusalem at the time. This is recorded in Acts also.

Acts 11:27–30 *“And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Paul.”*

In none of the previous texts mentioning the first day is there any evidence of a change made regarding the day of worship by Christ or the apostles.

Now we will look at some texts used to support Sunday worship even though neither Sunday or the first day is mentioned in them.

Colossians 2:16 *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days”:* **Verse 17** *“Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”*

Before we draw any conclusions on this verse, note verse 17 -*“Which are a shadow of things to come”* – This is saying the holydays, new moons and sabbath days which are a shadow of things to come are referring to the ceremonial days celebrated in the yearly feasts. Note the following evidence.

Hebrews 10:1 *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”*

This text in Hebrews is speaking of the laws concerning the sacrifices made in the sanctuary services and ceremonies which pointed forward to Christ and *“the good things to come.”* Read chapter 23 in Leviticus that describes these yearly ceremonies. After reading the entire chapter, note the following verses.

Leviticus 23:37 *“These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day.”*

These feasts described in Leviticus 23, because they were holidays and no work was to be done on those days, they were called sabbaths. But they were not to be confused with the seventh day Sabbath in the fourth Commandment. Note verse 38.

Verse 38 *“Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD.”*

“Beside” - in other words, these feasts or yearly sabbaths were to be separate from the weekly seventh day Sabbath and could fall on any day of the week. Note the next verse.

Verse 39 *“Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.”*

Just as Christmas, December 25th falls on a different day of the week each year, so the “fifteenth day of the seventh month” would fall on a different day each year. These ceremonial sabbaths were to be celebrated until the Messiah came. Then when the good things which they pointed to came (Christ), they were no longer necessary. This is speaking of the yearly ceremonial sabbaths and not the weekly seventh day Sabbath contained in the law of the Ten Commandments.

Next passage - **Romans 14:1-6** *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it*

unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”

The context of this passage is eating or not eating. But some teachers pull verses 5 and 6 out of their context and use them to argue that it doesn't matter which day is kept as the Sabbath day. They quote the following only.

“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.”

This is verse 5 and only part of verse 6. They leave out the eating part and in doing so they are clearly taking this out of context. The truth is that neither the Sabbath nor the first day is mentioned in this passage and Paul's intentions were not to say it didn't matter which day was kept as the Sabbath.

Today many preachers read something into these texts they do not say – and in doing so they are saying *“Thus saith the Lord – when the Lord has not spoken.”* (Ezekiel 22:28)

Many say the reason for not keeping the Sabbath is that it is not mentioned in the New Testament as the others are. But the Sabbath is mentioned in two places in the New Testament..

1) Luke 23:56 – *“And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.”*

2) Hebrews 4:4 – *“For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works”*

Verse 9 – *“There remaineth therefore a rest (sabbatismos) to the people of God.”*

The word translated *“rest”* in this verse is the Greek word *“sabbatismos”* which literally means *“Sabbath rest.”*

Hebrews 4:9 actually says – *“There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”* Many of the modern translations of the Bible correctly translate it this way.

We have looked at the texts commonly used by many Christian preachers and teachers to support worship on the first day. We have looked at all the biblical evidence for keeping the 7th day Sabbath. Now it's up to you to make an intelligent decision based on the evidence. Not on how you feel - Not on what's convenient - Not on what you've always done - Not on what mom and dad want you to do - but on what the Word of God clearly teaches!

Again, it is more than just a day - it's a holy day – it was given *“for our good always”* - there is a blessing in keeping the Sabbath according to God's commandment.

Isaiah 58:13 - *“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.”*

Many people after learning the truth about the Sabbath have become concerned about the past. The Bible gives us assurance that the past is not counted against us when we, after learning the truth, choose to do what's right.

Acts 17:30 – *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”*

When we learn truth – we must be willing to follow it – remember, it's about trusting God's Word!

Response Questions:

1. I agree Saturday is the Sabbath, the *“Lords Day”* of scripture.
Yes___ No___

2. I believe I should keep the Sabbath day holy. Yes___ No ___

3. Today I want to make a commitment with God's help, to begin keeping the Sabbath. Yes___ No ___

4. I may have a problem keeping the Sabbath. Work, family, or other issues may be an obstacle - please pray for me. Yes ___ No___