

SABBATH DENIGRATION

by Avram Yehoshua

The SeedofAbraham.net

Why is the 7th day Sabbath denigrated by the Christian churches? Is there something inherent in the New Testament that calls for this?

In Matthew 24:20 Yeshua says: ‘Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.’ Yeshua himself acknowledged the Sabbath well into the future for He was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Also, we have to remember that even though Yeshua said it at the time when He was in the midst of His Apostles, the accounts of Matthew (Mark & Luke) weren’t written until about 60–65 A.D.,¹ although new evidence suggests that Matthew was actually written about 44 A.D.² The Gospels, therefore, reveal what was important to the believing communities at that time, many years after the death and resurrection of Yeshua. If the 7th day Sabbath had changed by then the Gospels would have reflected it. Since there is no indication of any shift to Sunday assembly or even ‘holiness’ of the day (like the 7th day Sabbath, e.g. Gen. 2:1-3), we can safely say that the 7th day Sabbath, and therefore the Torah (Law), was still in effect for all believers.

It wouldn’t be until around 100 A.D. that it would begin to be replaced by the church at Alexandria, and the church at Rome, which would become the Roman Catholic Church. They were the first to rebel against God’s Word in this area, but it wasn’t for any alleged theological reasons found in the New Testament, although shameful theological notions would be given as justification for Sunday over God’s Sabbath.

The historical reason those churches severed themselves from Sabbath and Torah was because in 70 A.D., the Temple in Jerusalem, along with the entire city and one million Jews, was wiped out. The Roman legions boxed in not only the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but coming at the Passover of 68 A.D., they trapped many hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims, who lived all over the Roman Empire, inside the city and killed them, too.

News of the Roman slaughter spread like wildfire among the Jews throughout the Empire. Outraged and pierced to the heart at the desecration of the Temple, the annihilation of their fathers, brothers and friends, and the leveling of the City, many Jews rebelled and rioted all over the Roman Empire. Rome crushed them and began legislating persecutions and punishments in the form of progressive taxes and other anti-Jewish measures throughout their Empire. Samuele Bacchiocchi writes that because of the destruction of the Temple, etc., ‘violent uprisings’ among the Jews, scattered throughout the Roman Empire were ‘almost everywhere.’

‘The period between the first (A.D. 66-70) and second (A.D. 132-135) major Jewish wars’ (against Rome) ‘is characterized by numerous anti-Jewish riots (as in Alexandria, Caesarea and Antioch), as well as by concerted Jewish revolts which broke out in places

¹ R. T. France, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., Author; The Rev. Leon Morris, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., General Editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 29. The Gospel of John was written about 90 A.D. (R.V.G. Tasker, Author and General Editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: John* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 20.

² Compare [Matthew Wrote First](#), although I don’t agree with when Mark and Luke were written.

such as Mesopotamia, Cyrenaica, Palestine (sic), Egypt and Cyprus.’³

Bacchiocchi also writes that the Roman oppression of the Jews didn’t stop with military action:

‘Besides military measures, Rome at this time adopted new political and fiscal policies against the Jews. Under Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) both the Sanhedrin and the office of the High Priest were abolished and worship at the temple site was forbidden. Hadrian (A.D. 117-138)...went so far as to prohibit any Jew, under the threat of death, to enter the area of the new city. Moreover he outlawed the practice of the Jewish religion and particularly the observance of the Sabbath.’⁴

“Also significant was the introduction by Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) of the *fiscus judaicus*, which was intensified by Domitian (A.D. 81-96) first, and by Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) later. This Jewish ‘fiscal tax’ of a half shekel, which previously had formed part of the upkeep of the temple in Jerusalem, was now excised for the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus even from those, according to Suetonius (ca. A.D. 70-122), ‘who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews.’ Christian members could easily have been included among them.”⁵

Gentile believers in Rome and Alexandria, not wanting to get caught in the cross-fire, bolted away from the most obvious sign of their linkage to the Jew, the Sabbath. Fear of persecution by the Roman Empire (of being counted with the Jews) was the major motivation for changing the Sabbath to Sunday.

In order to justify the change of day they had to have some ‘theological’ reasons to cover their flight from God’s Word. The Sabbath had to be denigrated and Sunday elevated. It would be ‘proven’ that the Sabbath was only given to the Jews because of their stubbornness and sin, sort of as a curse, until Christ should come and do away with it. For instance, in the *Letter of Barnabas*⁶ (not to be confused with Paul’s companion), Bacchiocchi states,

“attempts to demolish the historical validity of Judaism by voiding its historical events and institutions of their literal meaning and reality” are presented. “Though the covenant, for example, was given by God to the Jews, ‘they lost it completely just after Moses received it’ (4:7) because of their idolatry and it was never reoffered to them...Justin similarly by a tour de force establishes a causal connection between the ‘murdering of Christ and of His prophets’ by the Jews, and the two Jewish revolts of A.D. 70 and 135, concluding that the two fundamental institutions of Judaism, namely circumcision and the Sabbath, were a brand of infamy imposed by God on the Jews to single them out for punishment they so well deserved for their wickedness.”⁷

Of course, the sheer absurdity that God withdrew His covenant from Israel after their sins in the Wilderness is fully proven false to anyone who has read about Joshua’s conquest of the Promised Land. God’s

³ Samuele Bacchiocchi, [From Sabbath to Sunday](#) (Rome, Italy: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), p. 170. This is the definitive work on the Sabbath vs. Sunday issue.

⁴ Ibid., p. 171, n. 19: ‘Some scholars maintain that sacrifices still continued at the temple after A.D. 70, though in a reduced form; K.W. Clark, ‘*Worship in the Jerusalem Temple after A.D. 70.*’

⁵ Ibid., p. 172.

⁶ Ibid., p. 218. The epistle (letter) is dated between 130 and 138 A.D. It was ‘written by a pseudonymous Barnabas probably at Alexandria, a cosmopolitan cultural center where the conflict between Jews and Christians was particularly acute.’ The letter was given the name ‘Barnabas,’ Paul’s companion, to imbue it with authority.

⁷ Ibid., p. 184. ‘Cf. *Dialogue* 16, 1 and 21, 1.’

plans for Israel, for their good, are an integral part of the Bible from start to finish, but in a day when not many had access to the Bible it was *easy* for the ‘leaders’ to concoct these lies and distortions and pass them on to their people. In another instance, the *Letter of Barnabas* attacks both the Jews and their God given Torah:

“As a people, the Jews are described as ‘wretched men’ (16:1) who were deluded by an evil angel (9:5) and who ‘were abandoned’ by God because of their ancient idolatry (5:14)...As to the fundamental Jewish beliefs (such as the sacrificial system, the covenant, the promised land, the circumcision, the levitical laws, the Sabbath and the temple) the writer endeavors to demonstrate that they do not apply literally to the Jews, since they have a deeper allegorical meaning which finds its fulfillment in Christ and in the spiritual experience of the Christians.”⁸

Justin, in his *Apologies* and *Dialogue with Trypho* in Rome (about 148-161 A.D.),⁹

“ignored the moral and corporal value of the Mosaic legislation, and regarded the law, as James Parkes states, ‘an unimportant portion of the Scriptures, a temporary addition to a book otherwise universal and eternal, added because of the special wickedness of the Jews.’”¹⁰

As Justin speaks to Trypho of the reason why the Sabbath and Feasts days were given to the Jews, he explains that they ‘were imposed upon you, namely, because of your sins and your hardness of heart.’¹¹

“While Paul recognizes the educative value of the ceremonial law, Justin considers it ‘in a negative manner as the punishment for the sins of Israel.’”¹²

‘The Sabbath, then, according to Justin, is a temporary ordinance deriving from Moses, enjoined to the Jews on account of their unfaithfulness for a time, precisely until the coming of Christ.’¹³

Isn’t this what one might hear today from many Christians? It isn’t new. Of course, nowhere can one find any Scripture to substantiate this denigration of God’s Jewish people, His Sabbath or His Law, but these are some of the initial ‘theological’ reasons that overrode the Sabbath and God’s Law to give Christianity Sunday and Easter, etc. The time period was after all the Apostles had died. If they would have been alive they would have rightly condemned those Christian men.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* and Justin totally miss that all the first believers in Jesus were Jews until the spectacular inclusion of the first Gentile, Cornelius, in Acts 10,¹⁴ and that all of the Apostles kept the Sab-

⁸ Ibid., p. 219.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 223-224, also note 31.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 224, note 32: ‘James Parkes (fn. 19), p. 101; cf. *Dialogue* 19 and 22.’

¹¹ Ibid., note 33: ‘Justin, *Dialogue* 18, 2, Falls, *Justin’s Writings*, p. 175.’

¹² Ibid., note 34: ‘W. Rordorf, *Sabbath*, p. 37, fn. 1.’

¹³ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁴ To understand that Cornelius was the first Gentile to come to the Jewish Messiah for salvation we need only discuss Acts 11:18, which is spoken by the Jewish Elders who believed in Yeshua, having taken Peter to task for eating with Cornelius. After Peter explains what God did, they say, ‘When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.’ Their shock at a Gentile believing in Jesus is evidence that Cornelius was the first to believe, and this, about ten years after the resurrection.

bath day holy and observed the Law of Moses 24–29 years *after* the Resurrection (Acts 21:20).¹⁵

Sunday Justification

The first ‘positive’ theological justification for Sunday that we have comes from the *Epistle of Barnabas*. The writer introduces ‘the eighth day’ concept as a way of ‘one-upping’ the 7th day Sabbath. Sunday, which *Barnabas* ‘designates as the ‘eighth day,’ is the prolongation of the Sabbath of the end of time and marks ‘the beginning of another world’ (15:8)’ for him.¹⁶

Justin, like *Barnabas*, also uses the 8th day as a reason for its priority over the 7th day ‘Jewish’ Sabbath. Even though they both speak of the resurrection as happening on Sunday, which it did,¹⁷ the value of the 8th day takes precedence over the resurrection. As W. Rordorf states,

‘the primary motivation for the observance of Sunday is to commemorate the first day of the creation of the world and only secondarily, in addition, the resurrection of Jesus.’¹⁸

This reasoning of the eighth day is not justified by Scripture, but by paganism and mythology. How many days are there in a week? Only seven and the day after the seventh is not the 8th day, but the 1st day of the week. Justin’s arguments are a perverse way of making Sunday ‘better’ than God’s holy 7th day Sabbath. Bacchiocchi writes that it,

‘is noteworthy that both Barnabas and Justin who lived at the very time when Sunday worship was rising, present the resurrection as a secondary motivation for Sunday-keeping, apparently because *initially this was not yet viewed as the fundamental reason*. Nevertheless, the resurrection of Christ’ would ‘emerge as the primary reason for the observance of Sunday.’¹⁹

What *Barnabas* and Justin were trying to do was to show that the first day of Creation was superior to the 7th Day Sabbath and that this could even be seen at the end of time as well. Unfortunately, there is no eighth day of the week. There are only seven, as at Creation. The 8th day, though, was a pagan mystical concept that *Barnabas* and Justin ‘borrowed’ from paganism. It’s not found in the Bible, but what of the resurrection? Can that provide biblical justification for Sunday observance?

¹⁵ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General editor; Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, associate editors, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. one (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 692 has Acts 21 at 54 A.D.

Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 25th printing, 1976), pp. 486-488 has 58 A.D.

J. D. Douglas, M.A., B.D., S.T.M., Ph.D., Organizing editor, *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, part 1 (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), p. 281 dates Acts 21 in 59 A.D. which would make it 29 years after the resurrection.

¹⁶ Bacchiocchi, [From Sabbath to Sunday](#), p. 271.

¹⁷ Scripture is silent as to the day that Yeshua rose from the dead, but Paul tells us it was Sunday. See [First Sheaf](#).

¹⁸ Bacchiocchi, [From Sabbath to Sunday](#), p. 272, note 6: ‘W. Rordorf, *Sunday*, p. 220.’

¹⁹ Ibid.

Silent on Sunday

Viewing all the resurrection texts ‘reveals the incomparable importance of the event,’²⁰ but as Bacchiocchi says,

“it does not provide any indication regarding a special day to commemorate it. In fact, as Harold Riesenfeld notes, ‘in the accounts of the resurrection in the Gospels, there are no sayings which direct that the great event of Christ’s resurrection should be commemorated on the particular day of the week on which it occurred.’”²¹

“Moreover, the same author observes, ‘the first day of the week, in the writings of the New Testament, is never called ‘day of the Resurrection.’ This is a term which made its appearance later.’”²²

As interesting as the above two quotes are, they assume a Sunday resurrection. What most don’t seem to realize is that although Yeshua was *first seen* on Sunday, the actual time and day of His resurrection is not given in the New Testament. In other words, when the women got to the tomb and saw the angel(s), Messiah had *already* been raised from the dead. The angel didn’t say, ‘He was *just* raised before you got here’, but that, ‘He has risen, just as He said!’ Here are the three Gospel accounts that are relevant to our issue:

‘He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying’ (Mt. 28:6).

“And he said to them, ‘Do not be amazed. You are looking for Yeshua of Nazareth who has been crucified. He has risen! He is not here! Behold! Here is the place where they laid Him’ (Mk. 16:6).

‘He is not here, but He has risen! Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee’ (Lk. 24:6).

The essence of what the three Gospels say are identical: Messiah rose from the dead. As to time or day, the angel (and the rest of the New Testament) is silent. Therefore, to believe that Jesus rose on Sunday is an assumption that cannot be verified by the New Testament. It’s more than likely that Yeshua rose from the dead on Saturday afternoon, which would have been the 7th day Sabbath.

The Sabbath is one of God’s greatest theological gems. It’s the ‘Crown of His Creation’ as it was made last, but it was the only day that was both blessed and called holy by God (Gen. 2:1-3). Not even Adam was called holy. It’s also the day of Redemption or Salvation, a very fitting epitaph to the resurrection of Yeshua. In Deut. 5:12-15 the reason God gives for keeping the Sabbath day holy is because He delivered Israel from Egypt. The Sabbath day was to typify or reflect that salvation experience. For Yeshua to resurrect on the 7th day Sabbath would coincide with two of the major themes of the Sabbath: Creation and Redemption (see also Ex. 20:8-11).

²⁰ Ibid., p. 75, note 3: ‘The resurrection of Christ is presented in the New Testament as the essence of the apostolic proclamation, faith and hope; cf. Acts 1:22; 2:31; 3:75 (sic); 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 10:40; 13:33-37; 17:18, 32; 24:15, 21; 26:8; 1 Cor. 15:11-21; Rom. 10:9; 1:1-4; 8:31-34; 14:9; 1 Thess. 1:9-10.’ (Acts 3:75 must be a typo for Bacchiocchi and refers to 3:15).

²¹ Ibid., note 4: ‘H. Riesenfeld, *The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day*,’ *The Gospel Tradition: Essays by H. Riesenfeld*, 1970, p. 124.’

²² Ibid., note 5: ‘H. Riesenfeld, *Sabbat et Jour du Seigneur*, in A. J. B. Higgins, ed., *N.T. Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson*, 1959, p. 212.’

Yeshua's appearance on Sunday morning is not in doubt, but to use this as a reason for Sunday over Sabbath flies in the face of biblical reality because *that* Sunday was known as First Fruits and shows us what He did after His resurrection. It was the Sunday of Passover week (Lev. 23:9-14), and as such, provides the reason why Yeshua tells Miryam (Mary) not to cling to Him because, although resurrected, He still needed to ascend to the Father (John 20:17). He would be mirroring what the High Priest in the Temple was doing in offering up the very first barley grain as first 'fruits' to God so that the rest of the grain could be eaten by Israel. God demanded that no new grain (at the beginning of spring) could be eaten before the first part of it was offered to Him (Lev. 23:14). In other words, the first of the grain that would sustain Israel was first offered in thanksgiving to God, then Israel could eat of it. Yeshua was first raised from the dead on the holy 7th day Sabbath of God. This is the reason why the Sabbath was made holy, it reflected Him as risen Savior. The grain, offered as a thanksgiving to God on the Sunday of Passover week (again, the theme of salvation), pictures Yeshua as the First Fruits of the Resurrection and then after His resurrection, believers in Him could partake of the Bread of Life, He having offered Himself to His Father in thanksgiving first.²³

These two facts, that no Scripture tells us that Jesus rose on Sunday and Yeshua's fulfillment of First Sheaf, blend together with both the Sabbath and Passover as repositories of God's Salvation. They point to Yeshua's resurrection on the 7th day Sabbath.

They offer a fuller understanding that the Sabbath and Passover were not done away with, but on the contrary, were supersaturated with the reality of Messiah Yeshua as our Savior. No one can have a biblical problem with the celebration of one's birthday or the anniversary of one's marriage. In this exact same concept God calls us to remember the Sabbath day and Passover as holy because it commemorates not only His Creation of the world, and now the New Creation through the blood of Yeshua, but also the salvation of Israel from Egypt by the blood of the lamb and the salvation of Israel (both Jewish and Gentile believer) from the Kingdom of Satan by the blood of the Lamb. How could anyone ever think that God's holy Sabbath and Passover were done away with?²⁴ These are the reasons we celebrate them. They honor

²³ For a fuller understanding of this please see [First Sheaf](#).

²⁴ Bacchiocchi, [From Sabbath to Sunday](#), p. 81. 'Epiphanius (ca. A.D. 315-403) suggests that until A.D. 135 Christians everywhere observed Passover on the Jewish date...irrespective of the day of the week.' Note 20: 'Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses* 70, 10, PG 42, 355-356'. This means that not only the Sabbath was kept by Gentile Christians (for if they kept the yearly Passover they certainly would have kept the weekly Sabbath), but that also, Passover, unlike '*Easter Sunday*' (which has no basis in Scripture) comes on any day of the week. All Christians for 70 years after the resurrection kept God's Passover. This flies in the face of theologians today who have theologized the Passover away. They have done this not because this is what is in God's New Covenant, but because of their ignorance in interpreting God's Word and their lack of experience in not observing Passover. They have never celebrated Passover, having been taught from childhood in the Church that it was done away with. They come to God's Word with false, preconceived notions about Passover and have gone about presenting their views, not according to Scripture, although they use Scripture, but according to their man-made traditions. Just like the Sadducees who thought that they knew the Scriptures (Mt. 22:9; Mk. 12:24), these theologians, too, 'know the Word' but don't divide it rightly (2nd Tim. 2:15; 2nd Peter 3:16). The same holds true for their 'understanding' of Sabbath and the rest of Torah. It is very hard for Christians today to think of Sunday and Easter, etc., as traditions of men that nullify God's Word when they have been immersed in it from childhood. These traditions become 'God's Word' to them and unless the Holy Spirit opens their blind eyes they remain captives of the Deceiver. What I have seen is that when it comes to understanding that Torah is for all of God's people today, the average Christian is just as blind to this as the average Jew is to Yeshua being the Messiah. Both are ensnared by Satan in these areas. Praise Yeshua for opening up blind eyes in both Camps!

and glorify the Lamb of God and God has commanded it.

Whether one believes Yeshua rose on Sunday or Sabbath is immaterial to Sunday overpowering the Sabbath. First of all, there is nothing in the New Testament to authorize Sunday as the day of assembly (Lev. 23:1-3) or holy (Gen. 2:1-3, Ex. 20:8-11, etc.) like the Sabbath is, or that it was made a day of rest from one's work to enter into God's work (Heb. 4:9; Deut. 5:12-15). If Sunday cannot display any of these things that make the Sabbath day special, how can it replace the Sabbath?

Second, for Sunday to obliterate the Sabbath of God the New Testament would have to contain explicit statements and theological reasons for such an enormous shift of biblical reality. A passing reference to Sunday cannot provide sufficient justification for overturning the God's holy Sabbath.

The Sabbath Among the Early Gentile Believers

Just a glimpse at Church history will reveal that Sunday did not come immediately after the resurrection or even within the first fifty years. Bacchiocchi writes,

“We have indications, however, that in the East’ (modern day Turkey and Syria where many congregations were) ‘the substitution of the Sabbath by Sunday worship was gradual since Jewish observances there constituted, as A. P. Hayman points out, ‘a perennial attraction...for the Christian.’”²⁵

In the ‘Gospel of Thomas’ written about 150 A.D. it states,

‘(Jesus said): ‘If you fast not from the world, you will not find the kingdom; if you keep not the Sabbath as Sabbath, you will not see the Father’ (E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1963, I, p. 514.)²⁶

Also, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8, 1, records that Polycarp's death occurred on ‘a festival Sabbath day.’²⁷ Polycarp died in 155 A.D. These are just a small portion of what Church history records in terms of those who ‘obstinately refused’ to follow Sunday, holding fast unto God's 7th day Sabbath.

Conclusion

In order for the Church of Rome to supplant the 7th day Sabbath of God it had to first denigrate it. This they did by saying that it was only given to the Jews as a curse for their sins, but that with Christ it would be done away with.

Sunday was then made to appear as first in prominence to justify it. This they got from their perception of

²⁵ Ibid., p. 217, note 13: ‘A. P. Hayman, ed., and trans., *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite Against a Jew*, CSCO 339, p. 75.’ ‘Sergius quotes them’ (Christians), ‘as saying: ‘I will associate partly with Judaism that I might hold on to the Sabbath’ (22, 15, p. 77’). This was written about 115 A.D.

²⁶ Ibid, note 14.

²⁷ E. A. Livingstone, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 458. Polycarp, 69-155 C.E. Bishop of Smyrna, in modern day Turkey. He was the leading believer of Messiah Yeshua in ‘the Roman province of Asia’ (Turkey) ‘in the middle of the 2nd century.’ He was a famous Gentile martyr who died for the Name of the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua. It is believed that he was discipled by both the Apostles John and Philip.

Creation Week. Unfortunately, they left out that God had made the 7th day then, before any Jews were around and had elevated it to prominence, not Sunday, but this didn't phase them because things can be said 'to be hidden until the time of Christ,' when Sunday would take its alleged rightful place over Sabbath due to its mystic quality of being 'the 8th day.'

Although the resurrection in the early post New Testament documents wasn't the primary reason used to elevate Sunday, it would soon become so. Eventually, it would supersede both the negative arguments of Jewish sin and the 8th day, but as we saw, the resurrection most likely took place on the Sabbath, for theological reasons (creation and redemption). Sunday therefore is very suspect. Yet, even if it weren't, there is no scriptural authorization in the New Testament for Sunday claiming to be a day that God wanted observed for any reason, resurrection or otherwise.²⁸ Therefore, to place it in the position of God's 7th day Sabbath is both unjustifiable and sin:

'Whatever I command you, you must be careful to do. You must not add to nor take away from it' (Dt. 12:32).

'The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever' (Is. 40:8).

The Word of God must be our authority as to what God wants of us and how He wants us to walk out this new life in Messiah Yeshua, not the traditions of men that nullify His Word (whether Jewish or Christian traditions).

"And He answered and said to them, 'Why do you yourselves transgress the Commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?'" (Mt. 15:3)

"You hypocrites! Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me! For in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men!'" (Mt. 15:7-9)

Most of Christianity has been entrapped by the theology of the Catholic Church concerning God's 7th day Sabbath. It's not too late to study the matter and change one's thinking and behavior. This is an indication that one is not only teachable, but also a follower of the Messiah of Israel.

Further cementing the observance of the 7th day Sabbath by Gentile Christians is the fact that the Passover was observed by all Christians until the Church of Rome severed itself from it and the rest of Law of Moses because they didn't want to be persecuted with the Jews. The following is an excerpt from Samuel Bacchiocchi's classic, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, and reveals that Passover was kept by the Gentile Christians. With this fact comes the understanding that the 7th day Sabbath was also obviously kept, and also, if the Passover was kept, the rest of the Law of Moses that applied to the Gentiles was also kept by them. Bacchiocchi writes,

"The historian Eusebius (ca. A.D. 260-340) provides a valuable dossier of documents regarding the controversy which flared up in the second century over the date for the celebration of the Passover."²⁹ There were, of course, two protagonists of the controversy. On

²⁸ Interestingly enough, the Sunday of Passover week known as First Fruits is not an annual Sabbath like the first day of Unleavened Bread or the first day of the seventh month, etc. Therefore, one cannot use the first appearance of Jesus on Sunday on First Fruits to say that Yeshua was first seen on an annual Sabbath. Pentecost (Shavuot), however, seven weeks after First Fruits, is a Sabbath, the only annual Sabbath that always occurs on Sunday. (Today, Judaism doesn't view Shavuot as always falling on Sunday. They have misinterpreted Lev. 23:15-16. See my article on First Fruits as for why.)

²⁹ Samuele Bacchiocchi, [From Sabbath to Sunday](#) (Rome, Italy: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), it's p. 118. Eusebius' account of the Easter controversy is found in his *HE* 5, 23-24. The book is free to read.

the one side, Bishop Victor of Rome (A.D. 189-199) championed the Easter-Sunday custom (i.e., the celebration of the feast on the Sunday usually following the date of the Jewish Passover) and threatened to excommunicate the recalcitrant Christian communities of *the province of Asia* which refused to follow his instruction.”³⁰

“On the other side, Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus and representative of the Asian Churches, strongly advocated the traditional Passover date of Nisan 14, commonly called ‘Quartodeciman Passover.’ Polycrates, claiming to possess the genuine apostolic tradition transmitted to him by the Apostles Philip and John, refused to be frightened into submission by the threats of Victor of Rome.”³¹

³⁰ Ibid. Bacchiocchi writes that it is difficult to accept Eusebius’ claim that with the exception of “the dioceses of Asia...the churches throughout the rest of the world’ celebrated Easter on Sunday (*HE* 5, 23, 1), when we consider the following facts:”

1. “Pope Victor (ca. A.D. 189-199) demanded the convocation of councils in various provinces to codify the Roman Easter (Eusebius, *HE* 5, 24, 8), obviously because a divergent custom existed.”
2. “The bishops of Palestine, who assembled together to discuss the matter, according to Eusebius, ‘treated at length the tradition concerning the Passover’ and then they formulated a conciliar letter which was sent ‘to every diocese that we [i.e., the bishops] may not be guilty toward those who easily deceive their own souls’ (*HE* 5, 25, 1). The lengthy discussion and the formulation of a conciliar letter, aimed at persuading and preventing the resistance of the dissidents...again indicates that in Palestine, by the end of the second century, there were still Christians who persisted in the observance of the Quartodeciman Passover.”
3. “The following testimonies of the Fathers indicate a wider observance of the Quartodeciman Passover than conceded by Eusebius:”

“*Epistola Apostolorum* 15; two fragments from two works of Hippolytus [lived from 170-235 AD] (one of them was on the Holy Easter) preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale* 6 (*PG* 92, 79) where he states: ‘Consider, therefore, in what the controversy consists...’ This would imply that the controversy was still alive in his time and felt possibly in Rome.”

“Athanasius of Alexandria [296-373 AD], who mentions the ‘Syrians, Cilicians, and Mesopotamians’ as observant of the Quartodeciman Passover (see his *de Synodis* 1, 5 and *ad Afros Epistola Synodica* 2).”

“Jerome [347-420 AD], who paraphrases a statement from Irenaeus’ work, *On the Paschal Controversy*, where the latter warns Pope Victor not to break the unity with ‘the many bishops of Asia and the East, who, with the Jews, celebrated the Passover on the fourteenth day of the new moon’ (see *De Viris Illustribus* 35, *NPNF*, 2nd, III, p. 370).”

“A fragment of Apollinarius, Bishop of Hierapolis (ca. A.D. 170) from his work on *Easter*, preserved in the *Chronicon Paschale* 6 (*PG* 92, 80-81), where it says: ‘The 14th Nisan is the true Passover of our Lord, the great Sacrifice; instead of the lamb, we have the Lamb of God.’”

“Severian, Bishop of Gabala (fl. ca. A.D. 400), who strongly attacks those Christians who still maintained the Jewish Passover ritual (see his *Homilia 5 de Pascha*, ed. J. B. Aucher [Venice: 1827], p. 180.”

“Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (ca. A.D. 315-403) deals extensively with the Quartodeciman controversy in his *Adversus haereses* 50 and 70. The Bishop suggests in various instances that the Quartodeciman custom, which he calls ‘heresy,’ was widespread. He writes, for instance: ‘And another heresy, namely the Quartodeciman, arose—rose up again, in the world—*anekupse palim to kosmo*’ (*Adversus haereses* 50, 1, *PG* 41, 883).”

“On the basis of these testimonies we would concur with Jean Juster’s comment that Eusebius is guilty of ‘wilful obscurity’ when minimizing and limiting the observance of the Quartodeciman Passover only to the dioceses of Asia (*Les Juifs dans l’empire romain*, 1965, p. 309, note 3).”

Brackets with dates in them for the lives of the men listed above (e.g. Jerome [347-420 AD]), were placed there by Avram so that you’d know when they lived.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 118-119.