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What does the Bible say about Saturday?

In this study, the proper, sacred name Yahweh will be used in the commentary for the deity. However, the various versions of the Bible will be quoted as written.

This article does not claim to show all truth or to be an official messenger of Yahweh. The intention of this article is to inspire **you** to investigate and learn what truth is. Learn what the Bible says and what history tells you, then decide what to do with it.

Did you know that there are Ten Commandments? Here they are:

1. *"You shall have no other gods before me."* (NIV, Ex. 20:3)
2. *"You shall not make for yourself an image..."* (NIV, Ex. 20:4a)
3. *"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God..."* (NIV, Ex. 20:7a)
4. *"Remember the Sabbath day..."* (NIV, Ex. 20:8a)
5. *"Honor your father and mother..."* (NIV, Ex. 20:9a)
6. *"You shall not murder."* (NIV, Ex. 20:13)
7. *"You shall not commit adultery."* (NIV, Ex. 20:14)
8. *"You shall not steal."* (NIV, Ex. 20:15)
9. *"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."* (NIV, Ex. 20:16)
10. *"You shall not covet..."* (NIV, Ex. 20:17a)

Most law-abiding, semi-religious citizens believe that they keep these Commandments. However, the Fourth Commandment is avoided altogether. "Remember the Sabbath day" has to do with Saturday. This article intends to show that:

- A. The Sabbath always existed.
- B. "Remember the Sabbath day" is one of the Commandments and was not part of the "Law" that was "nailed to the cross".
- C. Judeo-Christian churches acknowledge that the day of the week intended by this Commandment is Saturday.

We will travel through history together, starting at the beginning of the Bible and following through to the last book. We will then combine the biblical timeline with historical time. All of this information is readily available to you, we encourage you to verify the facts and seek truth out for yourself.

Let's go back to the beginning.

Creation

Genesis chapter 1 is all about the first 6 days of creation. Genesis 2:1-3 states:

*Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he **rested** from all his work. Then God **blessed** the seventh day and made it **holy**, because on it he **rested** from all the work of creating that he had done.* (NIV, Gen. 2:1)

In these verses, we see that from the beginning there was an importance to the seventh day (Sabbath) and it was somehow set apart as a special day.

The Commandments Existed

There are numerous examples of the Commandments being kept (or not kept with consequences) before the famous Moses brought the “Law” to the Israelites:

1. Genesis 4 – “**sin** is crouching at your door” (NIV, Gen. 4:7) and then Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4:8) – What sin? Murder.
2. Genesis 6 – “The LORD saw how great the **wickedness** of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only **evil** all the time.” (NIV, Gen. 6:5) – What sin? We don’t know exactly, something to do with violence, but there **was** sin.
3. Genesis 9:24-25 – “When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.’” (NIV, Gen 9:24-25) – What sin? We don’t know exactly, but there **was** sin.
4. Genesis 13 – “Now the people of Sodom were **wicked** and were **sinning** greatly against the LORD.” (NIV, Gen. 13:13) – What sin? We don’t know exactly, but there **was** sin.
5. Genesis 31 – “‘... But if you find anyone who has your gods, that person **shall not live**. In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it.’ Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had **stolen** the gods.” (NIV, Gen. 31:32) – What sin? Stealing.
6. Genesis 39 – “No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and **sin** against God?” (NIV, Gen. 39:9) – What sin? Adultery.
7. Genesis 44 – “They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, “Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid good with **evil**? Isn’t this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a **wicked** thing you have done.’” (NIV, Gen. 44:4-5) – What sin? Stealing.

Therefore, there is biblical evidence that these commands were known.

In addition, there remains to us an important verse about Abraham in Genesis 26:5, which reads:

*because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my **commands**, my decrees and my instructions.* (NIV, Gen. 26:5)

It should be noted that the Hebrew word underlying this verse for “commands” is the exact same word as “commandments”. Meaning, Abraham kept Commandments.

Just after Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt, the Bible gives in Exodus 15:26:

*He said, “If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his **commands** and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.” (NIV, Ex. 15:26)*

As before, this same word “commands” is the word for “commandments,” but the important thing to learn from this statement is that – at the time this was spoken to Moses - it was an “oral law”; the people were to listen to it.

Lastly, just before Moses gave the “Law” at Sinai, there is a story in Exodus 16: 23-30. After Moses told the people not to gather manna on the Sabbath, they did not listen (read your version). You should notice two things:

1. The “Law” did not exist, but there is a Sabbath day; and
2. “How **long** will you refuse to keep my **commands** and my instructions?” (v. 28)

You might have guessed... the word for “commands” here is still the word for “commandments.”

The Commandments existed as “oral laws” prior to the written “Law”, including the Sabbath.

Written Commandment, the “Law”

Next up in our chronological study of Saturday is the proclamation of the “Law” at Sinai.

In Exodus 20:8-11 we read:

*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it **holy**. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he **rested** on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD **blessed** the Sabbath day and made it **holy**. (NIV, Ex. 20:8-11)*

This is part of the written Law. Note that the reason for the Commandment is a remembrance of creation (i.e., “blessed”, “holy” “rested”).

As the biblical story continued, from Sinai to the birth of the messiah, the whole nation of Israel was required to keep the Sabbath under the written “Law”.

Hundreds of years later, the messiah was born and lived a righteous life, keeping the Sabbath week after week. We know he never sinned, and must have followed the Sabbath, as well as all of the Laws.

We know from the New Testament that he came, gave the good news, was killed by the Jews (Pharisees) and Romans, and was subsequently resurrected by Yahweh.

Post-Resurrection

The death and resurrection of the messiah brought some kind of change. Something happened to the “Law”, some believe it was “nailed to the cross” and sin was eliminated. Let’s take a look at some of the key verses.

- Col. 2:13-14 is the verse that talks about something being “nailed to the cross.” These verses are translated wildly different in various versions of the Bible. Here are some examples:
 - *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; 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; (KJV, Col. 2:13-14)*
 - *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. (NIV, Col. 2:13-14)*
 - *And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (RSV, Col. 2:13-14)*
 - *And you -- being dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh -- He made alive together with him, having forgiven you all the trespasses, having blotted out the handwriting in the ordinances that is against us, that was contrary to us, and he hath taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross; (YLT, Col. 2:13-14)*

Carefully look at what was “blotted” or “cancelled” and “nailed to the cross”:

- (KJV) *“the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us”*
- (NIV) *“the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us”*
- (RSV) *“the bond which stood against us with its legal demands”*
- (YLT) *“the handwriting in the ordinances that is against us, that was contrary to us”*

There is something here that was “written”, it was an “ordinance” (decree or law) that was “legal” and it “stood against us” and was “contrary” or “condemned us”. Some identify this as the Law in its entirety, freeing mankind from all possibility of sin. Let us examine several other verses in this context.

- Gal. 3:19 – *“Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator.” (NIV, Gal. 3:19)*
- Ezek. 20, esp. 25 – *“So I gave them other statutes that were not good and laws through which they could not live;” (NIV, Ezek. 20, esp. 25)*

- Ex. 32 - The story of the golden calf: This is the breaking point where the Israelites were almost destroyed, but instead had priests appointed and the entire “Law” of sacrifices and cleanliness.

In short, the “Law” was added because of sin. It made it impossible for anyone to keep it until the messiah came. The laws and statutes were “not good” (just like in Colossians 2, “against/contrary”) and by them, we “could not have life” (just like in Colossians 2, “condemned us”). A casual Bible student might be surprised to read these words. This points to some kind of “Added Law” being eliminated with the death and resurrection of the messiah.

Therefore, even though the “Law” was “nailed to the cross”, it did not include the Commandments. The Commandments were still in effect after the messiah’s death.

If this were true, we should see evidence of the Sabbath and the Commandments being kept by the apostles and the church of the New Testament after the resurrection of the messiah.

Apostles Keeping Commandments

The following biblical verses are intended to show that the Apostles continued to follow the Commandments after the “Law” was “nailed to the cross”.

- *“As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next **Sabbath**. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. On the next **Sabbath** almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.”* (NIV, Acts 13:42-44)
- *“On the **Sabbath** we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.”* (NIV, Acts 16:13)
- *“As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three **Sabbath** days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,”* (NIV, Acts 17:2)
- *“Every **Sabbath** he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.”* (NIV, Acts 18:4)
- *“for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.”* (NIV, Heb. 4:1-11, esp. 10)
- In, Acts 18:21 notice how the two versions of the Bible are different in this verse, a key point is stripped from the NIV:
 - *“But as he left, he promised, ‘I will come back if it is God’s will.’ Then he set sail from Ephesus.”* (NIV, Acts 18:21)
 - *“But bade them farewell, saying, **I must by all means keep this feast** that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.”* (KJV, Acts 18:21)
- *“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.”* (NIV, Acts 2:1)
- *“Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s*

*servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The **commandments**, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*" (NIV, Rom. 13:5-9)

- *"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right."* (NIV, James. 2:8-11)
- *"Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. **Keeping God's commands** is what counts."* (NIV, 1 Cor. 7:19)
- *"Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men"* (NIV, 1 Cor. 6:9-10)

The Bible shows that there is a Sabbath being kept (not just a Sabbath of the Jews), that there is significance to feasts, and that there are Commandments to keep. This is all after the messiah was resurrected. Which brings us to a prominent question, who do these things apply to?

"Is it for us?"

You may wonder, "Is this rule really for us?" Is the Sabbath "for the Jews" or for everyone? Let's see what the Bible says:

- Mark 2:24-28, see especially *"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."* (NIV, Mark 2:27) Note that the word for "man" is actually "mankind," it is not "Jew".
- *"... From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me, says the LORD."* (NIV, Isaiah 66:23) Note that all "mankind" will "come to bow down" from "one Sabbath to another," this has never happened before and points to a future event.
- *"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile"* (NIV, Rom. 10:12)
- *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (NIV, Gal. 3:28)

What you may see from this is that all mankind, whether Jew or Gentile, was given the Sabbath. Yes, it may be a Commandment, but what the messiah revealed in Mark 2 is that man is not the slave of the Sabbath, but that the Sabbath is a gift to mankind. If it is for all mankind, then it wasn't just a Jewish law.

Next we shall turn to early church history. After the history recorded in the Bible was completed, we still have a record of the early church arguing over the Sabbath, and claiming that the Sabbath was kept.

Early Church History

The early Christian church was diverse. There were many sects and leaders, until Rome tried to unify Christianity. The following topics will show that the Sabbath was kept, argued over, and finally suppressed.

- Proof Sabbath was kept – In the quotes below, we see ancient church fathers advocating the Sabbath.
 - Origen (c. 200 AD) – *“After the festival of the unceasing sacrifice is put the second festival of the Sabbath, and it is fitting for whoever is righteous among the saints to keep also the festival of the Sabbath. There remaineth therefore a sabbatismus, that is, a keeping of the Sabbath, to the people of God.”* (Homily on Numbers 23)
 - Tertullian (c. 200 AD) – *“Thus Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the law thereof. . . . He restored to the Sabbath the works for were proper for it”* (Tertullian, Book IV, Chap 12, Vol 3 Ante-Nicean Christian Library)
 - Archelaus (c. 216-274 AD), a bishop wrote in his disputation with Manes: *“Again, as to the assertion that the Sabbath has been abolished, we deny that He has abolished it plainly; for He was Himself also Lord of the Sabbath.”* (Acts of Disputation)
 - Socrates Scholasticus (c. 380 AD)... *“For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this”* (Ecclesiastical History 5:22)
 - *“For in the Church of Millaine (Milan), it seemes that Saturday was held in a farre esteeme... Not that the Easterne Churches, or any of the rest which observed that day were inclined to Judaism; but that they came together on the Sabbath day, to worship Jesus Christ the Lord of the Sabbath.”* (History of the Sabbath, Dr. Peter Heylyn, London 1636, Part 2, para. 5, pgs 73-74)
- Argument fueled by Anti-Semitism – The early church in its efforts to distance itself from the Jews, set about to eliminate the Sabbath from being kept.
 - Ignatius (c. 107 AD) – *“Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness; But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the workmanship of God, and not eating things prepared the day before, nor using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space, nor finding delight in dancing and plaudits which have no sense in them.”* (To the Magnesians chapter 9)
 - Novation (c. 250 AD) – *“But how perverse are the Jews, and remote from the understanding of their law, I have fully shown, as I believe, in two former letters, wherein it was absolutely proved that they are ignorant of what is the true circumcision, and what the true Sabbath.”* (On the Jewish Meats, chap. 1)
 - Athanasius (c. 290 AD) – *“On the Sabbath day we gathered together, not being infected with Judaism, for we do not lay hold of false sabbaths, but we come on the Sabbath to worship Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath,”* (Homilia de Semente, Sec. 1)
- Proof Sabbath was suppressed
 - Ambrose (c. 340) – and you may know this quote, as a form of it is very famous, in response to the new requirement to fast on the Sabbath – *“When I am at Rome, I fast on a Saturday; when I am at Milan, I do not. Follow the custom of the church where you are.”*(Hippo, Augustine, Epistle to Januarius, II, section 18) His advice has remained in

the English language as the saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" or "When in Rome..."

- Council of Laodicea (c. 363 AD) – Canon 29 – *“Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.”*
- Pope Gregory I (c. 600 AD) – in reaction to a church in Scotland, led by Columban - *“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 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 pretends to die and rise again, he wishes the Lord's day to be had 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.”* (Book VIII, epistle 1)

The fact that they outlawed the Sabbath on Saturday is evidence that it was being kept. The Catholic Church suppressed the Sabbath and dominated the religious landscape for the next thousand years. It wasn't until the 16th Century that there was a serious challenge to this authority.

Reformation & Rome's Challenge

The Protestant Reformation (c. 1517 – 1648) arose in response to the dominance of the Catholic Church and challenged the church's authority to change things in the Bible. They proclaimed that the Bible was the sole teacher of truth. There were many subject matters that were argued over and decreed on. However, one of the hidden reasons for the failure at the Council of Trent was the challenge issued by the Archbishop of Reggio. Here is the quote:

“The Protestants claim to stand upon the written word only. They profess to hold the Scripture alone as the standard of faith. They justify their revolt by the plea that the [Catholic] Church has apostatized from the written word and follows tradition. Now the Protestant claim, that they stand upon the written word only, is not true. Their profession of holding the Scripture alone as the standard of faith is false.

“PROOF: The written word explicitly enjoins the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath. They do not observe the seventh day but reject it. If they do truly hold the scripture alone as their standard, they would be observing the seventh day as is enjoined in the Scripture throughout. Yet they not only reject the observance of the Sabbath enjoined in the written word, but they have adopted and do practice the observance of Sunday, for which they have only the tradition of the [Catholic] Church. Consequently the claim of 'Scripture alone as the standard,' fails; and the doctrine of 'Scripture and tradition' as essential, is fully established, the Protestants themselves being judges.” (see Council of Trent, Archbishop of Reggio)

This argument points out to the Protestants that if they really thought that the Bible was the sole basis for truth, they would be keeping Saturday instead of Sunday.

Because the Protestants of the day would not suddenly adopt the Sabbath day and acknowledged that some traditions were not from “antiquity” but from “continuous inspiration,” much of their argument fell apart. Afterward, there was a great increase in the Catholic Church.

Three hundred years later, the Catholic Mirror (an official weekly newsletter of Cardinal Gibbons and the Papacy in the United States) published a series of articles offering a similar argument to the Protestants of the day. These articles were titled, “The Christian Sabbath,” but have been often dubbed, “Rome’s Challenge.”

Copies of Rome’s Challenge exist on the Internet, but it is written in rather archaic English. A summary of the argument is provided here:

1. The Protestant churches claim to be followers of the Bible and the Bible alone. (i.e., not the Pope)
2. The observance of Sabbath on Sunday is a Catholic institution and not in any way based on the Bible.
3. The fact that Protestants observe Sunday proves to be “*groundless, self-contradictory, and suicidal.*”

The point that should be gathered by these very authoritative declarations from the Catholic Church is that they fully acknowledge that the church, on its own authority, changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. The Catholic confidence in this change supports and confirms the biblical truths described in this document.

More biblical support for the continued respect and observance of the biblical Sabbath comes in the form of future prophecies.

Future Sabbaths

The Bible has many prophecies about future events. When these future events tell us that Sabbaths and Commandments will be kept in the future, it reinforces the fact that the command to keep these Sabbaths still applies. Here are some examples:

Revelations 14, for example, tells us:

This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus. (NIV, Rev. 14:12)

The word for “commands” in the underlying Greek of this quote is the word for “commandments”. The Commandments, during this future time, will be kept.

Matthew 24 ominously states about a future time of tribulation:

Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. (NIV, Matt. 24:20)

While it could be argued that someone else in Judea is keeping this Sabbath, the implication of hardship likely implies the ones in flight.

Isaiah 66, for our final example, states that “all mankind” will bow before Yahweh from “one Sabbath to another”:

“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’ declares the LORD, ‘so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the LORD. (NIV, Isa. 66:22-23)

It is clear, therefore, that a time will come when all mankind will be responsible for the Commandments of Yahweh and will be keeping Sabbaths.

Summary

Scholars and theologians have written thousands of pages on the topic of the Sabbath. There is much more information for further research on this topic. However, in this short study of facts that are readily available, we have demonstrated that the Sabbath existed since the creation epic, that it was not “done away with” with the death and resurrection of the messiah, and that it is readily acknowledged as Saturday by the church that altered it.

Additional personal study and research may be necessary on the part of the reader, but hopefully the reader has come to the realization that the Heavenly Father Yahweh of the Old and New Testaments wants us to keep his Commandments, all ten of them. And the Fourth Commandment is, “*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy*”.

This article was intended as an introductory piece on the importance of the observance of the Sabbath and is meant as a steppingstone. If you found this article helpful and would like more information please visit www.yahweh.org and browse their free online publications, in particular “The Sabbath and Jubilee Cycle.” Thank you for reading.