



#12

Revelation's Sign of God

In Revelation 14:6-12, we find a special three-fold message that goes out to the whole world just before Jesus returns. One of the key issues in this message is *worship*. It draws a stark contrast between those who worship “Him that made”—the Creator—and those who worship the beast. What does it mean?

The first chapter of Genesis records how God created our world, and at the end of six days, God looked at what He had made and declared that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). Creation was perfect! There was no pain, no suffering, no disease and no death. In only six days, God had achieved perfection—but He wasn't quite finished.

On the seventh day, God did something more. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us that on the *seventh day*, God did three things: (1) He rested, (2) He blessed the seventh day, and (3) He sanctified it, or set it apart for holy use. He didn't do that with the other six days! Why did He do this? Was He tired? No. Isaiah 40:28 explains clearly that the Creator doesn't get tired. Rather, He was setting an example for *us*. He was giving us a day on which we could rest from the day-to-day affairs of life and simply spend time with Him. Every week, there is a day that reminds everyone that God *made* everything around them. If God had chosen a pillar as a monument to His creative power, somebody could have knocked it down. If He had put a plaque on the wall, somebody could have ripped it down. But God chose a day—something that nobody could tamper with—and to this day, we still have a seven-day week as a result.

This special monument in time was so important to God that you will find it in His Ten Commandment moral law (see Exodus 20:8-11)—and here God explains that the reason to keep the seventh day holy is as a memorial to His creative power. Some have wrongly assumed that the seventh day was set apart only for the Jews at Mt. Sinai. The question might be asked: How many Jews were there in the Garden of Eden? None! There were no Jews for hundreds and hundreds of years after creation. The day was set apart and blessed long before Moses received the Ten Commandments on tables of stone.

Exodus 16:26-30 illustrates this. Before Moses received a copy of the Ten Commandments, the Israelites were reprimanded by God for gathering food on the Sabbath day. Obviously, the Sabbath was binding *before* Mt. Sinai—it has existed since creation!

The Sabbath is important, because it keeps us focused on the fact that God *is* the Creator. That is what sets Him apart from anything else human beings might choose to worship. Bible passages such as 1 Chronicles 16:26, Psalm 96:5 and Jeremiah 10:11, 12 point out that what sets God apart from false gods is His creative ability. False gods cannot create something out of nothing. Neither can Satan, and that is why he hates the fourth commandment. It points out that he is not a real god! Satan has declared that *he* would like to sit on God's throne (see Isaiah 14:12-14), but the fourth commandment clearly points out why he isn't qualified. Out of all the commandments, the fourth commandment is the biggest reminder that Lucifer is *not* God. And

so if there is one commandment that the devil hates more than all the rest, guess which one it is going to be?

The Sabbath was still in effect when Jesus walked the earth, too: Luke 4:16 tells us that it was Jesus' *custom* to go to church on the Sabbath day—and if He was thinking about changing the day of worship, He never said a word about it! In fact, by the time He died at Calvary, His followers were still keeping the Sabbath. Luke 23:54-56 tell us that after the crucifixion, His followers still kept the Sabbath “according to the commandment.” Apparently, Jesus had never mentioned a change in the day of worship!

Actually, Jesus pointed out that His followers would still be keeping the Sabbath long after He returned to heaven. In Matthew 24:15-20, Jesus discusses the destruction of Jerusalem—an event approximately 40 years after the resurrection—and indicates that the Sabbath would still be in effect. The disciples did not change the day of worship, either. Passages such as Acts 13:14, Acts 13:42-44, Acts 16:13 and Acts 18:4 make it clear that they continued to observe the Sabbath long after the resurrection.

The fact is, you simply can't change God's Ten Commandment moral law. James 2:10-12 teaches that if you break one commandment, you break them all. They are a cohesive unit—you can't dispense with one of them. In Matthew 5:17-19 Jesus said that not “one jot or one tittle”—not the smallest detail—would pass from God's law until heaven and earth pass away. Nowhere does the Bible ever say that the Sabbath was abolished or changed.

Many people feel that Sunday worship is a memorial to the resurrection, yet if you search the Bible, you will never find any instruction to that effect. The Bible *does* provide two memorials of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus: baptism (Romans 6) and the communion service (Luke 22:19). But Sunday, or the first day of the week, is never established as the new day of worship.

BUT ISN'T SUNDAY THE “LORD'S DAY”?

That expression is only ever found once in the Bible, in Revelation 1:10. Read it—there is nothing there to indicate that God is talking about the first day of the week. The context of the rest of the Bible, in fact, makes it obvious which day is the Lord's day. Matthew 12:8 and Ezekiel 20:20 both declare the Sabbath to be the Lord's day! The fourth commandment says that the seventh day is the “Sabbath of the Lord.” Sunday isn't the Lord's day—the seventh day is!

BUT SHOULDN'T WE SIMPLY KEEP EVERY DAY FOR THE LORD?

Of course, we ought to serve God and dedicate ourselves to Him every day, but the fourth commandment not only declares the seventh day holy, but it also declares that the other six days are for working! (Exodus 20:8-11) The other six days were not blessed by God and set apart for holy use. They are for working. The seventh day is unlike any other day.

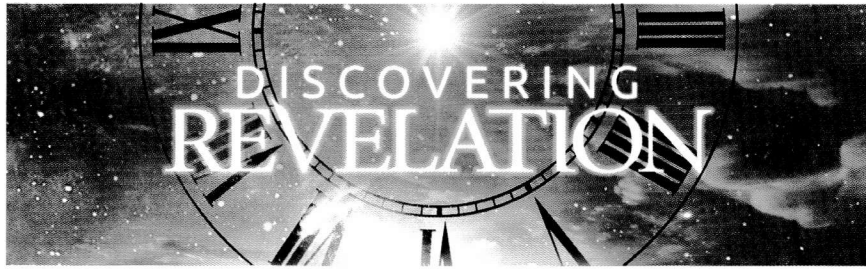
BUT HASN'T THE CALENDAR BEEN TAMPERED WITH?

It has—but the weekly cycle has *never changed*. In 1582, 10 days were dropped from the calendar, but Thursday the 4th of October was still followed by Friday—the 15th of October! The Sabbath is the same day it was in Jesus' day. In fact, in at least 108 of the world's languages, Saturday is still called the Sabbath!

There is no doubt about it. The Sabbath was there at creation, it was there for the Israelites, it was there in Jesus' day, and it was there for the disciples and the New Testament church. It will still be there in the world to come, too! Isaiah 66:22, 23 tells us that in “the new heavens and the new earth,” we will still worship God on the Sabbath!

In the last days, says the Bible, a warning message goes out to the whole world: “Worship Him that *made...*” (Revelation 14:7). The issue is allegiance. “If you love Me,” said Jesus, “keep My commandments” (John 14:15). How did it happen? Aren't there texts in the Bible that talk about the first day of the week? We'll see you tomorrow!

12-2



#2 Revelation's Sign of God

Did you ever wonder where our seven-day week came from? Years, days, hours, minutes and seconds are all based on the time it takes the earth to revolve around the sun and on its own axis. Months are related to the cycles of the moon. Nothing in nature marks off a seven-day week, yet it is firmly in place everywhere around the world.

Where did the seven-day week originate?

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD

1. How many days did God use in creating our world?
(Genesis 1:31-2:1)

At the end of the sixth day of creation week, God saw that everything He had made was "very good." But God wasn't quite finished.

2. What happened on the seventh day of creation week? (Genesis 2:2, 3)

God instituted the Sabbath as a memorial of creation. The Sabbath is essentially the birthday of the world. Just as your birthday commemorates the day you were born, so the Sabbath is a memorial to the creation of the world.

3. What three things did God do when He instituted the seventh-day Sabbath? (Genesis 2:2, 3)

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____



God didn't rest because He was tired! He rested as an example for us. He gave the Sabbath to us as a day to rest from all our usual daily activities and to spend time with Him. He blessed the seventh day and sanctified it—set it apart for a holy use—as a gift to us and as a reminder that He is the God who created us.

THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH IS A LASTING MEMORIAL

4. What reason does God give for asking us to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy? (**Exodus 20:8-11**)

God enshrined the seventh-day Sabbath in the heart of His Ten Commandments. He commands us to keep it holy because He created the earth and every living thing. The Sabbath is a lasting memorial to God's creative and redemptive power. (**Ezekiel 20:12**)

5. On what basis does God claim a right to our worship? (**Revelation 4:11**)

His creative power is what distinguishes the true God of heaven from all false gods and idols. (**Psalm 96:4, 5**) Each week, the Sabbath is an enduring memorial, pointing us to God as the One who made us and who is deserving of our worship.

IS THE SABBATH STILL IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY?

6. What was Jesus' custom regarding worship while He was on earth? (**Luke 4:16**)
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If Jesus intended to change the day of worship, He never said a word about it! When He died, His followers were still keeping the seventh-day Sabbath "according to the commandment." (Luke 23:54-24:1)

7. Did the apostles continue to keep the seventh-day Sabbath following Jesus' death and resurrection? (**Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:13; 18:4**)

Neither Jesus nor his apostles said anything about changing the day of worship from the seventh day to the first day of the week. The consistent record of the New Testament is that they kept the seventh-day Sabbath of God's Ten Commandments. Jesus said that God's law will remain as long as heaven and earth continue. (Matthew 5:17-19)

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

8. Doesn't the New Testament call Sunday the "Lord's Day"? (**Revelation 1:10; Matthew 12:8**)

The Apostle John states that he was in vision on "the Lord's Day." John doesn't specify which day of the week he is referring to as the "Lord's Day." But the rest of the Bible is clear that the Lord's Day is the seventh-day Sabbath. (Matthew 12:8)

9. Doesn't the Bible indicate that Christians should observe Sunday as the memorial of Jesus' resurrection? (**Romans 6:3-5**)

Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. But the Bible points to baptism—not Sunday—as the memorial to His resurrection. Nowhere does God's Word indicate that Christians are to observe Sunday as a memorial of the resurrection—or for any other reason.

10. Shouldn't Christians keep every day for the Lord? (**Psalms 96:2; 145:2**)

Of course we should serve God every day. But the fourth commandment not only declares the seventh day holy, but it also declares that the other six days are for working. (Exodus 20:8-11) The other six days of the week were not blessed by God or set apart for holy use. The seventh-day Sabbath is unlike any other day.

#12 pg 4

Hasn't the calendar been changed through the centuries so that we can't be certain which day is the seventh day of Bible times?

Ten days were dropped out of the calendar in 1582 to correct some discrepancies that had built up over the years. But the weekly cycle has never changed. In 1582, Thursday, October 4, was followed by Friday, October 15. The seventh-day Sabbath today is the same seventh-day Sabbath it was in Jesus' day.

THE SABBATH: AN ISSUE OF ALLEGIANCE AND LOVE

11. In vision, the Apostle John saw three angels, each with a message to proclaim to the world. What command did he hear the first angel announce? (Revelation 14:6, 7)

In the last days, renewed attention will be given to worshipping God as the Creator and to keeping His seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial to His creative power. Satan rebelled against God in heaven, because he wanted to be like God, sit on his own throne, and be worshipped. (Isaiah 14:12-14) The Sabbath commandment shows that Satan is not the true god. That is why Satan hates the Sabbath so much.

The issue is one of allegiance and love. "If you love Me," said Jesus, "keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

MY DECISION

- I want to keep all of God's commandments, including the fourth, by keeping His seventh-day Sabbath holy.

MY PRAYER

Father, thank You for the gift of the Sabbath. I look forward to spending special time with You on the Sabbath each week. Keep me close to You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.