

Who “Changed” God’s Law?



SABBATH—MAY 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Romans 8:1; Romans 7:15–25; Romans 7:1–14; John 20:19–23; Acts 20:6, 7; Daniel 7:23–25.

MEMORY VERSE: “This king will say things against the Most High God. And he will hurt and kill God’s people. He will try to change times and laws that have already been set. The people that belong to God will be in that king’s power for three and one-half years” (Daniel 7:25, ICB).

THE SABBATH AND GOD’S LAW will have an important part in the last days. But let us be clear about something first. We believe that we are saved by faith alone. So, we know that obeying the law and keeping the Sabbath holy will never save us, right? At the same time, we also know that in the last days obeying God’s law will be a test. When we honor the Sabbath, we will show to everyone on earth that we are loyal to God. So, the Sabbath is very important.

Soon it will become clear to everyone on earth who God’s true followers are. The terrible warning in Revelation 13 and 14 will soon happen. At that time, a strong group of religious leaders and government rulers will join together. They will use their power to force everyone on earth to worship a false god. But God commands His people to worship Him (Revelation 14:7). God made us. So, He wants us to worship only Him.

This week we will study about God’s law. We will look at the Sabbath and the religious power that tried to change the Sabbath law. We also will study what this “change” to the law means for us in these last days of earth’s history.



When we honor the Sabbath, we show other people that we are loyal to God.

THE PROMISE (Romans 7:15–25)

We find one of God's most beautiful promises to us in Romans 8:1: "So now anyone who is in Christ Jesus is not judged guilty" (ERV). The word "So" tells us that this promise is the answer to the question Paul asked at the end of chapter 7 (read Romans 7:24). That tells us we must study the verses at the end of chapter 7 first. Then we will better understand God's promise to us in Romans 8:1.

Read Romans 7:15–25. What is Paul saying to us in these verses? How does the message in these verses make the truth that Paul talks about in Romans 8:1 so comforting?

Was Paul really talking about himself in these verses? Bible experts have argued over the answer to this question for many hundreds of years. But one thing is clear: Paul is saying that sin is very real. Everyone, including Christians, can understand in some way the fight that Paul talks about here. Who has not felt the desire to do wrong? Who has not given in to sin? We all have! We also know how it feels to *not* do what we know we should do. For Paul, the law is not the reason why we sin. We sin, Paul says, because of our weak human flesh.

Have you ever found yourself wanting to do what was right, but then you did what was wrong instead? Of course, you have. Again, we all have. Paul may not be talking about the fact that we are going to give in to sin after we become born-again believers in Jesus. But it is clear Paul is talking about the never-ending war against sin that every loyal follower of God must fight.

Next, Paul says these famous words: "What a terrible failure I am! Who will save me from this sin that brings death to my body?" (Romans 7:24, NIV). The answer to Paul's question is found in Jesus. The answer also is found in the wonderful promise that "those [people] who belong to Christ [Jesus] will not suffer the punishment of sin" (Romans 8:1, NIV). These believers now live new lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, believers fight against sin. Yes, sin is real. But by faith in Jesus, believers are no longer judged guilty by the law. They obey the law. The Holy Spirit helps them to live new lives. They no longer live lives full of sin.

Why is Romans 8:1 such a wonderful promise?



Every loyal follower of God must fight a never-ending war against sin.

THE LAW AND SIN (Romans 7:1–14)

In yesterday’s study, we looked at Romans 7:15–25. These verses talked about how real sin was for every human, even Christians. But just before these verses, Paul points to the law. The law shows us that the problem of sin is everywhere. The law also shows us that sin causes death.

Read Romans 7:1–14. What do these verses tell us about the connection between the law and sin? What do these verses also tell us about how we can never be saved by the law?

Paul teaches two important ideas in these verses. First, Paul shows us that the law is not the problem. After all, the law is “holy and right and good” (Romans 7:12, NLV). The problem is sin. Sin leads to death. Second, Paul says that the law has no power to save us from sin and death. The law clearly shows us the problem of sin and death. The law shows us our need to be saved. But the law does not offer us anything to solve the sin problem.

Only someone who was not reading Romans 7:1–14 very carefully could use these verses to say that God had thrown out the Ten Commandments. Nothing Paul is talking about would make any sense if we did not have to obey the law anymore. Paul believes that the law continues to have power in our lives. After all, it is the law that shows us that sin is real. The law shows us our need for the Good News about Jesus too. That is why Paul says: “You might think I am saying that sin and the law are the same. That is not true. But the law was the only way I could learn what sin means. I would never have known it is wrong to want something that is not mine. But the law said, ‘You must not want what belongs to someone else’ ” (Romans 7:7, ERV).

Read Romans 7:13 carefully. What is Paul saying in this verse about the law and why we need the law even now?

The law does not bring death. Sin does. The law shows us just how dangerous sin is. The law is good. It shows us our sin. It cannot solve the problem of sin. Only the Good News can. That is why Paul says we must “serve God in the new way, with the Spirit” (Romans 7:6, ERV). We must stay connected to Jesus. We must trust in Him to save us.



Sin leads to death.

DID GOD REALLY CHANGE THE SABBATH TO SUNDAY? (1 Corinthians 16:1–4)

We often hear other Christians say that the law has been thrown out. Or they say that we no longer need to obey the law because we are now under grace. Grace is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. What are these Christians really saying? They really mean we do not have to obey the fourth commandment anymore. There are other Christians who say that the seventh-day Sabbath was changed to Sunday. These Christians believe that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday because Jesus woke up from the dead on Sunday.

The Christians who say the Sabbath was changed to Sunday believe they have the Bible verses to prove it too.

We are going to look at some of these verses in the New Testament. As we read the verses, we need to ask ourselves a couple of questions. Are these verses really talking about a change in the Sabbath day from the seventh day to the first day of the week? Or are these verses simply describing different things in the Bible that happened on Sunday?



Jesus' followers collected money at home for God's people on the first day of the week. But their reasons for getting together had nothing to do with a change in the Sabbath.

Read John 20:19–23. These verses talk about why Jesus' followers meet together in an upstairs room. What reason do these verses give for why Jesus' followers meet together there? Some Christians say that Jesus' followers met in that upstairs room to worship Jesus on Sunday because He woke up from the dead on that day. What do these verses say about that?

Read Acts 20:6, 7. What, if anything, in these verses shows that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, the first day of the week? Read also Acts 2:46 to answer the question.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1–4. We learn from these verses that Jesus' followers collected money at home for God's people on the first day of the week. But what, if anything at all, do they teach us about any change to the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday?

Not one verse we looked at shows that the believers met together to worship on the first day of the week. Their reasons for getting together had nothing to do with a change in the Sabbath. Christians who say these verses prove that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday are making these verses say something they never meant to say.

THE SEVENTH DAY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Luke 4:14–16)

Yesterday, we looked at the verses used by many Christians to prove the idea that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. We learned that those verses do not prove this idea at all. But what do we learn about the seventh-day Sabbath in the New Testament? In every verse about the Sabbath, we see that God's people kept the Sabbath holy.

Read Luke 4:14–16 and Luke 23:55, 56. What do these verses tell us about the seventh-day Sabbath before Jesus' death and after it?

Luke talks about the women who followed Jesus. Look at what Luke says these women did. "On the Sabbath day they rested, as commanded in the Law of Moses" (Luke 23:56, ERV). Clearly, this verse talks about the fourth commandment of God's law that He wrote in stone at Sinai. Now, what if Jesus really changed the Sabbath? Then why would these women be resting on it? The answer is clear. These women rested on the Sabbath because Jesus never taught them that they should stop keeping it after He died. Jesus told His followers, " 'If you love me, you will do what I command' " (John 14:15, ERV). Jesus' commands include the seventh-day Sabbath. Jesus honored this command Himself. Did Jesus really replace the Sabbath with Sunday? If yes, then why did these women know nothing about it?

Read Acts 13:14, 42–44 and Acts 16:12, 13. What proof do these verses give us for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath holy? What proof do they give us for keeping Sunday?

We do not find any proof in these verses that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. But these verses show us clearly that the first believers in Jesus kept the seventh day holy.

Acts 16:13 is interesting because it does not happen in a synagogue. A synagogue is a Jewish place of worship, or "church." The believers met by a river instead. Some Christians often went to the river to pray. That happened many years after Jesus died. So, if the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, why does the Bible say nothing about it?

How can you share the truth about the Sabbath in a gentle and loving way with people who worship on Sunday?



The women who followed Jesus rested on the Sabbath day after He died. Their resting on the Sabbath shows us that Jesus never changed it.

THE LITTLE HORN AND THE SABBATH (Daniel 7:23–25)

We must obey God's law. God's law includes the Sabbath. So, why do so many Christians worship on Sunday?

We must turn to the book of Daniel to answer that question. Daniel 7 talks about four big kingdoms that would rule the earth: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and then Rome. Then another kingdom rises to power during the time that Rome rules the earth. Daniel names this power the little-horn power. Who is the little-horn power? What other power could it be but the Roman Catholic Church? Thomas Hobbes says the same thing. Hobbes was a leading thinker in the 1600s. Hobbes wrote: "Where did the Roman Catholic Church come from and get its power? Any man who thinks about this matter will see easily that the Roman Catholic power is the 'ghost' of the dead Roman kingdom."—*Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), page 463; adapted.

Read Daniel 7:23–25. What do these verses teach us that can help us understand how Sunday worship got started?

Daniel 7:25 shows us that the little-horn power tried to change God's law. We do not know exactly how that happened. We do know that the Roman Catholic Church changed the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday. Today, most Christians worship on the first day of the week. They do not follow the Bible's command to honor the seventh day.

What same word pictures are found in Revelation 13:1–17 and Daniel 7:1–8? How do these word pictures help us understand what will happen in the last days?

Revelation uses the same word pictures about the little-horn power we find in Daniel. These word pictures show the Roman Catholic Church's attacks on God's people that will happen in the last days. The Bible warns us that in the last days of Earth's history the Roman Church will attack anyone who refuses to "worship" on Sunday.

Revelation 14:7 uses words taken from the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:11). How does Revelation 14:6, 7 help to show us that the Sabbath will have a very important part in the last war over worship? This war will happen on this earth before Jesus comes back.



The little-horn power in Daniel 7:23–25 is a word picture for the Roman Catholic Church.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: The book of Revelation says that Satan acts the same as a dragon. This “dragon” made war against God in heaven (Revelation 12:7). This same dragon makes war with God’s people on Earth. God’s people show they worship God because they “obey the Laws of God” (Revelation 12:17 [NLV]; Revelation 13:2, 4). But the Bible warns us that Satan will be worshiped too (Revelation 13:4). So, we see that Satan’s war against God continues here on Earth. What is the thing that Satan attacks in his war against God? God’s Sabbath.

“The fourth commandment shows us that God is the One who made the heavens and the earth. This work makes God different from all false gods. God made the seventh day holy. He gave the holy Sabbath to man as a rest day and to remind man of His work in making the earth. God made the Sabbath to help humans remember the living God. God made the Sabbath to remind humans that He made them and that He is worthy of their worship and love. Satan tries to turn people away from God and from obeying God’s law. So, that is why Satan attacks the fourth commandment. The Sabbath points us to a belief in God as the One who made humans.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great [big] Controversy [war between God and Satan]*, pages 53, 54; adapted.

We worship the Lord because He made the heavens and the earth. The seventh-day Sabbath reminds us of that work (read Genesis 2:1–3). No wonder Satan attacks the Sabbath. After all, the Sabbath shows God’s power.

In the last days of Earth’s history, God will have a people on the earth who stay loyal to Him. God’s people show their strong faith and loyalty to Him by obeying all His laws, including the Sabbath law. The Sabbath reminds us that God is the One who made us. It shows everyone on earth that God alone is worthy of their loyalty and worship.



God gave the holy Sabbath to humans as a rest day. God made the Sabbath to help humans remember that He made the earth.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Many Christians say that sin is real. But they also argue that God’s law has been thrown out. What is the problem with this idea? What big mistake can you find with this thinking?
- 2 What has been your experience with people who say we should keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath? What did you say to them? How did they answer you? How do you answer people who say that keeping the Sabbath holy is another way of trying to save yourself by your own good actions?