
"THE HISTORY OF THE 7TH DAY SABBATH (SATURDAY) AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH"

Compiled from articles in the **MANUAL OF APOSTLES' DOCTRINE AND PROCEDURE**
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INTRODUCTION: Have you ever wondered why CHICK-FIL-A is closed on Sundays? And, why do people go to church 2 times on Sunday—morning and evening? Ever wonder why Grandma knows nothing about the Feasts of God—including ancient Jewish Festivals? It's because Satan devised a centuries-long plan to eradicate anything "Jewish" from what we call Christianity today. Buckle your seat belt and get ready to take a wild ride through ancient Church history. No wonder it was called **THE DARK AGES!**

—Pastor David Kramer

I. THE ROLE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND CATHOLIC CHURCH

A. Beginning with Jesus, Himself, persecution and martyrdom were characteristic of the church through its first three centuries of existence. All of the apostles except John were martyred, as were a large percentage of believers and leaders of the church through subsequent generations. The pagan Roman government was continually hostile toward the Christian believers, subjecting them to the cruelest of torture and death.

B. The Roman Emperor Hadrian (AD 117 - 138)

1. *"In AD 130 the Roman Emperor Hadrian visited Judaea and ordered the construction of a new city to replace the town that Roman General Titus had razed to the ground, Jerusalem (AD 70). It was to be a Roman City, with a Roman temple dedicated to the Roman supreme god Jupiter. Two years later, Hadrian forbade castration and circumcision, making a law against a practice that had offended Greek and Roman sensitivities for a long time. The Jews explained this law as directed against them. As a 4th century author put it: 'At this time, the Jews started a war because they were forbidden to mutilate their genitals.' Little is known about the initial stages of the revolt. 'Soon, the whole of Judaea had been stirred up, and the Jews everywhere were showing signs of disturbance, were gathering together, and giving evidence of great hostility to the Romans, partly by secret and partly by open acts; many others, too, from other peoples, were joining them from eagerness for profit, in fact one might almost say that the whole world was being stirred up by this business.' (Cassius Dio, Roman History 69, 13. 1-2] The revolt was clearly religious in nature. The rebels were convinced that this was the apocalyptic hardhat had been predicted by prophets like Daniel and Zechariah. Like all wars, it was a human catastrophe. The Christian author Hieronymus (second half 4th century) writes that 'the citizens of Judaea came to such distress that they, together with their wives, children, gold and silver remained in underground tunnels and in the deepest caves' (Commentary on Isaiah 2:15). Slowly but surely, the Romans gained the upper hand. After the Jewish defeat, Hadrian tried to root out Judaism. The prisoners were sold at Hebron and Gaza, each one at the price of a horse. He forbade the conquered to teach Mosaic law and to own scrolls. The province Judaea was renamed Palestine; Jerusalem was called Aelia Capitolina." [Wars Between the Jews and Romans, http://www.livius.org/ja-jn/jewish_wars/jwar07.html]*
2. *"After AD 135 radical changes occurred in the Jewish world. In that year, the Roman Emperor Hadrian crushed the Second Jewish Revolt which had been unsuccessfully led by Bar-Kokhba. Jerusalem became a Roman colony from which Jews (and Jewish Christians) were excluded. Hadrian renamed the city Aelia Capitolina and, more important still, he outlawed the practice of the Jewish religion in general and of Sabbath keeping in particular throughout the*

empire. There are indications that Sunday observance was introduced at this time as an attempt to emphasize to the Roman authorities the Christian distinction from Judaism. [How Did Sunday Keeping Begin? Biblestudy.org]

II. SENTIMENTS OF THE EARLY CHURCH LEADERS AFTER THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES

- A. **IQNATIUS OF ANTIOCH [AD 110]:** *"Those who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e. Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death."*
- B. **JUSTIN MARTYR FIRST APOLOGY CHAPTER 67 [AD 155]:** *"But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. "*
- C. **SYLVESTER I (AD 314-335)** was the pope during the reign of Constantine. Here is what he thought of the Bible Sabbath: *"If every Sunday is to be observed joyfully by the Christians on account of the resurrection, then every Sabbath on account of the burial is to be execration [loathing or cursing] of the Jews."*
- D. **CYRIL - THE CATHOLIC BISHOP OF JERUSALEM [AD 350]:** *"Fall not away either into the sect of the Samaritans or into Judaism, for Jesus Christ has henceforth ransomed you. Stand aloof from all observance of Sabbaths and from calling any indifferent meats common or unclean."*
- E. *"The [Catholic] church took the pagan buckler of faith against the heathen. She took the pagan Roman Pantheon, [the Roman] temple to all the gods, and made it sacred to all the martyrs: so it stands to this day. She took the pagan Sunday and made it the Christian Sun day...The Sun was a foremost god with heathendom. ...There is, in truth, something royal, kingly about the sun, making it a fit emblem of Jesus, the Sun of Justice. Hence the church would seem to have said, 'Keep the old, pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.' And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus. The sun is a fitting emblem of Jesus. The Fathers often compared Jesus to the sun; as they compared Mary to the moon."* [William L. Gildea, *Paschale Gaudium*, in *The Catholic World*, 58, March, 1894, p. 809]

III. TIMELINE OF ROMAN EMPIRE/CHURCH MANDATES REGARDING JEWS AND/OR SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

- A. **321 AD – ROMAN EMPEROR CONSTANTINE'S EDICT:** *"On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost."*
"In the year 321 the Emperor Constantine, who was not yet a declared Christian, but was still hovering between paganism and Christianity, issued a decree making Sunday a compulsory day of rest: but the fact that he speaks of Sunday as 'the venerable day of the Sun' [the pagan sun-worship title for the day] shows that he was thinking of it as a traditional sun-festival at the same time that he thought of it as a Christian holy day...Sunday came to be observed throughout Europe as it is still observed by Roman Catholics, namely, as a day on which, like our Christmas, people went to church in the morning and then gave themselves over to rest or to holiday-making or sports." [Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity*, 1928, pp. 236-237]

- **363 AD Council of Laodicea** - Observing the Jewish Sabbath is condemned; Sunday is commanded to be the day of rest from labor: *"Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and, if thy can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema (def. Abhorrent, repulsive, death) from Christ."* [The 29th Canon]
 - **375 AD The Apostolic Constitutions** - *Worshipers are commanded to assemble twice on the Lord's day—morning and evening.*
 - **585 AD The 2nd Council of Macon** - Work of any kind is prohibited on this day [Sunday], and it is commanded that Christians worship God on this day.
 - **590 AD Gregory the Great** (became Bishop of Rome in 590 A.D.) - He condemned Sabbath observance as a "doctrine of the Antichrist" (also the applying of Sabbath laws and rituals to the Lord's Day).
 - **747 AD Council of Clovishoff** - This Council, which was held in England, decreed that travel is forbidden on the Lord's Day.
 - **749 AD The Constitutions of Egbert** - Severe penalties are levied against anyone who works on Sunday.
 - **789 AD Charlemagne** - In France he issued a decree prohibiting all ordinary labor on Sunday as a breach of the 4th commandment
 - **14th Century The Archbishop of Canterbury**-In the 14th century he ordered "abstinence from secular work on the sacred day of the Lord." However, he warned the people not to meet on Saturdays lest they "partake in the Jewish profession." [Al Maxey, THE LORD'S DAY It's History and Significance, www.zlanet.com/maxey/Study4.html]
- B. ***"The Church of Rome adopted concrete measures to wean Christians away from Sabbath-keeping and to encourage Sunday worship instead.*** Justin Martyr, for instance, writing in the mid-second century reduces the observance of the Sabbath to a temporary Mosaic ordinance which God imposed exclusively on the Jews as 'a mark to single them out for punishment they so well deserve for their infidelities. ' This kind of negative reinterpretation of the Sabbath led Christians to transform their Sabbath observance from a day of feasting, joy and religious celebration into a day of fasting, with no eucharistic celebration or religious assemblies permitted. The Saturday fast served not only to express sorrow for Christ's death, but also, as emphatically stated by Pope Sylvester (314-337 A.D.), to show 'contempt for the Jews' and for their Sabbath 'feasting'. The sadness and hunger resulting from the fast would enable Christians to avoid 'appearing to observe the Sabbath with the Jews' and would encourage them to enter more eagerly and joyfully into the observance of Sunday. Because the basic function of the Saturday fast was to discourage Sabbath- keeping and to enhance Sunday worship, it seems likely that the Sabbath fast and Sunday worship both originated contemporaneously and at the same place. There is no question that the Saturday fast was introduced by the Church of Rome." [How Did Sunday Keeping Begin? Biblestudy.org]

IV. THE ANTI-SEMITISM OF CONSTANTINE

- A. **Roman Emperor Constantine denounces Passover and anything Jewish.** *"When the question arose concerning the most holy day of Easter, it was decreed by common consent to be expedient, that this festival should be celebrated on the same day by all, in every place. ...And truly, in the first place, it seemed to every one a most unworthy thing that we should follow the custom of the Jews in their celebration of this most holy solemnity, who, polluted wretches! having stained their hands with a nefarious crime, are justly blinded in their minds. It is fit, therefore, that, rejecting the practice of this people, we should perpetuate to all future ages the celebration of this rite, in a more legitimate order, which we have kept from the first day of our Lord's passion even to the present times. Let us then have nothing in common with the most hostile rabble of the Jews. We have received another method from the Saviour. A more lawful and proper course is open to our most holy religion. In pursuing this course with a unanimous consent, let us withdraw ourselves, my much honored brethren, from that most odious fellowship."* [Eusebius Pamphilus, *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan, 1966) p. 52]
- B. **Constantine makes it against the law to keep Passover:** *"Besides, it should be considered that any dissension in a business of such importance, and in a religious institution of so great solemnity, would be highly criminal. ...As it is necessary that this fault should be so amended that we may have nothing in common with the usage of these parricides and murderers of our Lord..."* [Eusebius Pamphilus, p. 53]

V. THE PRESUMED AUTHORITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- A. *"The [Roman Catholic] Church changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday by right of the divine, infallible authority given to her by her founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant, claiming the Bible to be the only guide of faith, has no warrant for observing Sunday. In this matter the Seventh Day Adventist is the only consistent Protestant."* [The Catholic Universe Bulletin, Aug. 14, 1942, p. 4]
- B. *"Nowhere in the Bible do we find that Jesus or the Apostles ordered that the Sabbath be changed from Saturday to Sunday. We have the commandment of God given to Moses to keep holy the Sabbath day, that is, the seventh day of the week, Saturday. Today, most Christians keep Sunday because it has been revealed to us by the [Roman] church outside the Bible."* [Catholic Virginian, Oct. 3, 1947]