

Has the Sabbath Changed?

In this message we will look at the 7 passages in Acts which talk about the observance of the Sabbath in the early Christian church. We are seeking an answer to the question "Has the Sabbath Changed?"

There are over 85 Sabbaths being kept by the church, and that's in addition to references we cannot count like "Moses is read every Sabbath" (Acts 15:21), "prayer was customarily made on Sabbath" (Acts 16:15), and "As his custom was, Paul entered the synagogue" (Acts 17:2).

Did the Early Church keep Sabbath?

Acts 13:42-46 (2 Sabbaths) see also Acts 13:14-16 in Antioch Pisidia

So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

In Acts 14:1 (1 Sabbath) in Iconium

Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

Verse 3 says they stayed there "a long time". But we'll count this as one.

Acts 15:21 about the decision of the Jerusalem Council

For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

The record in AD 49 says this went on every Sabbath in the Christian church.

Acts 16:13-15 (1 Sabbath) in Philippi

And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made.

Lydia "customarily made" prayers on the Sabbath.

In Acts 17:2-4 (3 Sabbaths) in Thessalonica.

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

Three Sabbaths are mentioned, plus Paul's "custom" of doing this every week.

Acts 18:4 - in Corinth

And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 18:11 (78 Sabbaths)

And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

One would think that after a year and a half of preaching Paul would get to the subject that the Sabbath had changed to Sunday if in fact it had...but alas he never did.

These verses refer to a total of 85 Sabbaths! In addition to the non-specific mentions of “every Sabbath”, “customarily”, and “as his custom was”.

In these verses Jews and Gentiles kept Sabbath together; the Sabbath was designed for all.

Exodus 20:10 - the Sabbath was for “the stranger within your gates.” Exodus 20:10

Isaiah 56:6, 7 - Sabbath-keeping foreigners were also considered the covenant people of God

Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

Isaiah 66:22-23 - the Sabbath will be observed by all people in the new earth.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord, “So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord.

Mark 2:27 - Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for all mankind.”

Did the early Church observe Sunday?

Acts 20:7 - Over 36 years of history covered, only verse mentioning the first day of the week.

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

“Breaking bread” and preaching do not prove a shift from Sabbath to Sunday. The early church did these things every day of the week (Acts 2:46, 47; 5:42; 16:5; 17:11; 17:17; 19:9).

How did the Early Church keep Sabbath?

They went to church - Acts 13:14-16; 42-46; 14:1; 17:2; 18:4; Leviticus 23:3

They read the scriptures - Acts 13:14-16; 42, 44; 15:21; 17:2; 18:4.

They witnessed - Acts 16:13-15

They baptized - Acts 16:13-15

They spent time in nature - Acts 16:13-15

Ex. 20:10; Neh. 13:15-21 - Having others serve us and doing business on Sabbath prohibited.

Since Sabbath is made for all mankind (Mark 2:27) then all mankind must be permitted to rest, not just believers. We should do nothing that requires ourselves or others to work on Sabbath.