

## Sabbath Rules: When They Were Changed

We somehow have inferred that Paul had evangelistic success from what happened to the Sabbath among Christians, but this was *unrelated* to Paul's direct efforts. It *happened much later than Paul's lifetime*.

By means of Constantine's authority as Emperor, the Roman Bishop after 325 A.D. imposed on Western Christianity its own abolition of obedience to the Law of Moses. This vindicated a teaching of Paul that the early church previously resisted. The Roman Bishop, who later wore the crown of *pope*, called keeping any of the Law of Moses heretical Judaizing, relying upon Paul. For example, in 365 A.D., Constantine's clergy of Rome passed a decree at the Council of Laodicea that served as law prohibiting resting on the Sabbath (Saturday) thenceforth because it was *judaizing*.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to that time, the clear practice in Christianity was to rest on the Sabbath and worship on Sunday. This is preserved in the *Constitution of the Apostles*, once regarded as canon direct from the apostles. *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Book 7, ch. XXIII & XXX; Book 2, LXI; Book 5, ch. XX.)<sup>2</sup>

Every Sabbath-day... and every Lord's day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice. *Id.*, Vol. 7, "Constitution....," Book 5, ch. XX.

This Sabbath (Saturday) and Sunday worship practice was only changed in the Western (Roman Catholic) church. The Eastern Orthodox and its current 250 million members have since the first century to the present kept the Sabbath with uninterrupted regularity.

As Protestants from a Western European heritage, we are still living with the reality-bubble created by our inheritance of Christian history from a Roman Catholic perspective. We look at history through the portrait it gave us. Paul looks triumphant because Roman Catholicism does not teach the Law of Moses applies. So we assume that only Paul's success can explain the ban on Sabbath rest among Christians or its total de-emphasis. We assume that this ban on Saturday Sabbath goes back to apostolic times. We then believe Paul's view of Christianity *triumphed in his lifetime*. This, however, is completely false.

Instead, when we look at Acts and the teachings of early Christianity, it demonstrates clearly that it is pure chance that one branch of Christianity in 365 A.D. finally changed the rules to match Paul. It had nothing to do with Paul's doctrines having permeated the entire church from the beginning.

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1. The council decreed in canon 29: "Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather, honoring 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." (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (1990), *supra*, XIV at 148.)
  2. *Anti-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to a.d. 325* (Ed. The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D.) (Reprint of Edinburgh Edition of T&T Clark)(Grand Rapids: Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans). A reprint of Book 7 is at [http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-07/anf07-47.htm#P6620\\_2278762](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-07/anf07-47.htm#P6620_2278762). A reprint of Book 2 and 5 are at the same webpage, except identified as ANF-02 or ANF-05.