

## The Reason Why

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For years people were content to keep the first day of the week as the Sabbath because they were taught from childhood that this was right. No one felt called upon to give a special reason for doing that which no one questioned. We say that no one questioned the correctness of their action, not because there were none who condemned first-day observance both by word and act, but because those who kept the seventh day were so few in number as to be practically unknown. And so people kept Sunday because their parents did, and were content. Whenever the good people wished to reason with a worldling who would persist in finding his own pleasure on the first day of the week, they would quote, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," taking it as a matter of course that "Sabbath" meant Sunday, and that the fourth commandment was gotten up for the express purpose of protecting the first day from worldly toil and pleasure.

But the time came when their quiet was disturbed. Those who read the commandment far enough to find out that "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord," and had the courage to obey the commandment as it reads, preached the "new" doctrine with such vigor as to attract general attention. To the surprise of all the people who were quietly following custom, and to the disgust of many of them, it was found that the seventh day really is the Sabbath of the Bible, that it was that day that received the divine blessing and sanctification in the beginning, and that unfortunately the Bible writers had omitted to say anything about a change of the day of weekly rest. Some persons very sensibly concluded that if the Lord had wanted men to observe the first day of the week instead of the seventh he would have said something about it, and immediately adopted God's original plan. The reason that God was abundantly able to make known his will, that he had done so very clearly in times past, even concerning matters of seemingly little importance, and that when he had not spoken it was very presumptuous in man to speak for him. See Ezekiel 13:7

Others, however, acted on the principle that Sunday-keeping *must* be right because, (1) It has been kept by nearly all the world for many centuries; (2) The leaders of the church do not accept the seventh-day Sabbath (see John 7:47, 48), and they certainly ought to know what is right; (3) It would be very inconvenient to make a change; and therefore (4) They were determined not to change. Having come to this conclusion, they felt that it was incumbent on them to give some reason for their course of action, especially since they were very strongly urged to do so by those who kept

the Sabbath "according to the commandment." Accordingly they promptly gave, substantially, the following "reasons:"—

1. "The Sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, because Christ rose from the dead on that day."
2. "The first day of the week is the one that was originally sanctified. The Jews were too wicked to be allowed to keep it, so the Lord let them keep Saturday for a while; but there has really been no change at all in the Sabbath day."
3. "We keep Sunday because the world is round, and it is impossible to keep any one day."
4. "The seventh day is indeed the Sabbath, and all men ought to keep it, for it is plainly commanded; but we can't tell which day of the week is the seventh, and therefore we keep the first."
5. "The seventh day was the Sabbath from the beginning, but the Jews lost their reckoning while in Egypt, and since that time nobody has had the correct reckoning of the time."
6. "The Jews lost the correct reckoning during the Babylonian captivity, and consequently no one can tell whether or not the day that they now keep is the true seventh day."
7. "Christ kept the seventh-day Sabbath, and so did his disciples, "according to the commandment;" but during the dark ages of papal supremacy much time was lost; indeed, no reckoning whatever was kept for a long time, and so it is absolutely impossible to tell whether our Saturday is the seventh or the fourth day of the week, or even to tell in what year of the Christian era we are now living."
8. "We keep the first day of the week because, after the resurrection of Christ, the apostles kept it, and from their time to the present we have an uninterrupted record of Sunday observance."
9. "The commandment enjoins the observance of the only a seventh part of time; there is nowhere in the Bible a command to keep a definite day, so we keep Sunday."
10. "The ten commandments are now abolished, and the New Testament is the Christians only guide; but it is not a book of laws, and we don't find in it the express command for Sabbath observance, and we therefore observe the first day of the week."

These are only a few of the many "reasons" given for keeping Sunday rather than the seventh day. As will be readily surmised, they were not developed in council, but were "sought out" by different individuals as occasion required. We but state the simple truth, however, when we say we have heard every one of the above "reasons" given in a single discourse, and that by a minister who was held in high repute as a man of learning. Whenever the above-mentioned "reasons" seemed unsatisfactory, others were given that were equally unsatisfactory!

In spite of all this, people would wonder why the Bible contains no command for Sunday observance. They think this "new" Sunday-keeping is right, but feel hurt that the Lord had not vouchsafed them one word of encouragement. If only one text could be found, what a relief it would be. Such ones may set their minds at rest. The Rev. J. M. Bailey, D. D., has found out just the reason why the Bible is silent on the subject of first-day observance; and he has given his discovery to the world through the columns of the *Morning Star*, a Free-Will Baptist journal published in Dover, N. H. He says: —

"It appears that the convocation was changed from the seventh to the first on the very day of the resurrection of Christ. *What he said* to the disciples about it to convince them, *we have no means of knowing*. [Italics ours.] He met some of them several times that day, and then appeared in their assembly where they met with closed doors for fear of the Jews, and sanctioned their meeting by breathing on them the Holy Spirit, and sending them forth as the Father had sent him. Probably *for fear of the Jews, what he said* against Judaism, or *in favor of the Christian Sabbath, was not published*."

Do not smile dear reader. This was written in sober earnest, by a learned Doctor of Divinity, for the express purpose of combating the *errors* of seventh-day keepers. We do not know how he regards his work, but it is our opinion that he leaves nothing more to be said. Before closing we wish to ask, "Who was it that was so fearful?" Was it Christ, who denounced the Jews to their face, calling them hypocrites? Of course he did not fear personal violence to himself. "Was it Peter who feared to tell what Christ did say against the Sabbath and in favor of Sunday?"—he who faced the Jewish Sanhedrim, and, charging that body with the murder of Jesus, only declared that "we ought to obey God rather than man." Paul was not present on that night, but he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5), being taught by the Lord Jesus himself. Galatians 1:11, 12. No one can accuse him of fearing to preach the word, and he himself declared that he had not avoided declaring "the whole counsel of God." Acts 20:27; but he has left nothing on record concerning Sunday-keeping.

We need not pursue the subject further. We will simply say that we too believe that fear operated to a certain extent to prevent the disciples from preaching that the Sabbath was changed. Not the fear of the Jews, but fear of disobeying Christ's instruction in Matthew 28:19, 20; fear of being found false witnesses of God, and bringing upon themselves the curse recorded in Galatians 1:8, 9