

NEW TESTAMENT EVIDENCE THAT THE FIRST CHRISTIANS OBSERVED THE SEVENTH DAY SABBATH AFTER CHRIST'S RESURRECTION: -

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied all emphasis throughout this Study Document.

It is generally assumed by those Christians who observe the first day of the week, that 7th day Sabbath-keeping had largely been laid aside by the first Christians in the book of Acts. But a careful reading of this inspired historical document of the apostolic church reveals no such thing! In fact, it reveals abundant evidence that the apostolic church were 7th day Sabbath-keepers. Let us establish this history from God's Word.

- Evidence 1: - The Lord Jesus Christ instructed his disciples to pray that their flight from the city of Jerusalem at the time of its approaching destruction, would not take place in winter, or upon the Sabbath day. Thus Jesus recognized the fact that his disciples would not be able to keep holy the Sabbath day, if they had to flee Jerusalem on the holy day. This recognizes the binding claims of the 7th day Sabbath among the disciples of Christ, up to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Matthew 24:20 & 21: - "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, **neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.**"

NOTE: - But the obligation of the 7th day Sabbath goes further than just 70 AD. Reading VS. 21 immediately after Jesus command about the Sabbath day, we find that the disciples of Christ will be keeping the Sabbath day holy, right up until the time of "great tribulation", at the end of this world's history.

- Evidence 2: - The apostle Paul testified near the close of his ministry, that he had not violated in any way, the Laws and Ancient Customs which God entrusted to the Hebrew people. These Laws and practices included the observance of the 7th day Sabbath.

Acts 25:7 & 8: - "And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against **Paul**, which they could not prove. **While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews**, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, **have I offended any thing at all.**"

Acts 28:17: - "And it came to pass, that after three days **Paul called the chief of the Jews together:** and when they were come together, he said unto them, **Men [and] brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers**, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans."

NOTE: - Paul could only truthfully make these two positive statements concerning his being a law-abiding Hebrew, if in fact, he had been a 7th day Sabbath-keeper! If he had set aside the observance of the 7th day Sabbath during his long ministry, he would be telling a falsehood in both of these two passages. **Paul was a law-abiding Hebrew and thus he was a 7th day Sabbath-keeper!**

- Evidence 3: - The unbelieving Jews followed the apostles around in their ministry (particularly the apostle Paul), and stirred up the Gentiles and the civil authorities against the apostles as being trouble makers. Yet in all their accusations against the followers of Christ as recorded in the book of Acts, **never once** did the Jews accuse the Christians of being Sabbath-breakers! If they could have, they would certainly have accused them of this crime, particularly the apostle Paul in his trials before the Jewish Sanhedrin. The complete silence of the Jews on this point is powerful testimony that the apostolic Christians were 7th day Sabbath-keepers!
- Evidence 4: - The first Christians still worshipped in the Jewish synagogues upon the 7th day Sabbath. In fact, there is an abundance of evidence upon this point.

☞ Saul persecuted the saints in every synagogue. Not only in the synagogues in Israel, but in foreign cities. This indicates that the first Christians were still worshipping upon the 7th day Sabbath after the resurrection of Christ. Acts 26:9 - 11: - "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: **and many of the saints** did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against [them]. **And I punished them off in every synagogue**, and compelled [them] to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted [them] even unto strange cities."

☞ The apostle James' decision concerning the Gentile converts to Christianity, in relation to the first General Church Council in Jerusalem, took into consideration the fact that the Gentile Christians were still worshipping every Sabbath in the synagogues.

Acts 15:19 - 21: - "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, **which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:** But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and [from] fornication, and [from] things strangled, and [from] blood. **For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.**"

NOTE: - If we read this passage carefully, James' decision concerning the Gentile converts is based upon VS. 21 – the very first word of this verse indicates that – "For" Moses is being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day. In other words, the Gentile converts were hearing the writings of Moses being read every Sabbath, when they went to the synagogue to worship the Lord. Otherwise VS. 21 is meaningless and has no relevance to the Gentile converts at all.

☞ The apostle Paul's ministry and the action of the disciples of the Lord at Ephesus, indicates that the Christians worshipped in the Jewish synagogue for a considerable length of time, until the opposition of the unbelieving Jews made it necessary for Paul to separate the disciples from the synagogue. This worship in the synagogue would have been on the 7th day Sabbath as we have seen from James statement in Acts 15:21. Let us outline this sequence of events concerning Paul's ministry at Ephesus.

During Paul's first visit to Ephesus, he worshipped and preached in the Jewish synagogue, and he received a favourable hearing from the Jews. He had to leave them to go to Jerusalem, promising to return to them again, Lord willing.

Acts 18:19 - 21: - "**And he came to Ephesus**, and left them there: but **he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.** When they desired [him] to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus."

After Paul left Ephesus, his fellow gospel workers, Aquila and Priscilla continued to worship in the synagogue, where the Jew Apollos came and preached John the Baptist's message to them. They enlightened him concerning the advanced light of the Word of God concerning Christ. He wished to go through the regions of Achaia to preach Christ to the Jews (which he subsequently did). The brethren at Ephesus wrote a letter recommending him to the disciples of Christ in Achaia.

Acts 18:24 - 28: - "**And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, [and] mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.** This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. **And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto [them], and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.** And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, [and that] publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

NOTE: - Where were these brethren of Ephesus who wrote this recommendation of Apollos worshipping the Lord? In the synagogue where Apollos preached! This is further reinforced by the following facts concerning Paul's return to Ephesus.

When he arrived back, he preached for three months (that is 13 Sabbath days) in the Jewish synagogue. The disciples of Christ were worshipping there as well, **until** certain of the unbelieving Jews opposed the message of Christ before the multitude. **Then, and it was only then**, that Paul himself withdrew from the synagogue, and he **separated** the disciples of Christ from the synagogue as well. In other words, the Church at Ephesus was founded among 7th day Sabbath-keepers, who worshipped in the synagogue until they had to leave because of Jewish opposition.

Acts 19:1, 8 & 9: - "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, **Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: ... And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.** But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, **he departed from them, and separated the disciples**, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."

- Evidence 5: - The apostle Paul established a large number of the Christian churches outside of the land of Israel. After his establishment of these churches, he later wrote Pastoral Epistles to several of these congregations. A careful study of his raising up these churches indicates that the **foundation members of these various congregations were 7th day Sabbath-keepers, when Paul preached Christ to them.** And we also find that the Gentiles who turned from the worship of idols to the worship of the Creator God of the Hebrews, were already 7th day Sabbath-keepers, before they accepted Christ. Let us establish this truth from the book of Acts.

☞ Paul's ministry at Antioch in Pisidia.

Acts 13:14 - 16, 26 & 42 - 48: - "But when they departed from Perga, **they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.** And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, [Ye] men [and] brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. **Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with [his] hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. ... Men [and] brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God,** to you is the word of this salvation sent. ... **And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.** Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed **Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.** But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, **we turn to the Gentiles.** For so hath the Lord commanded us, [saying], I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

NOTE: - A few important facts can be brought out from this passage. Paul's audience in the synagogue was made up of two groups: -

1. Men of Israel – VS. 16; Children of the stock of Abraham – VS. 26; the Jews – VS. 42 & 43; and,
2. Those who fear God – VS. 16 & 26; the Gentiles – VS. 42; the religious proselytes – VS. 43.
3. The Gentile converts asked the apostles to preach to them upon the next Sabbath day.
4. The apostles exhorted those who were favourably impressed with their message, to continue in the grace of God. Thus establishing the truth, that observing the 7th day Sabbath is **not** contrary to, or falling from the grace of God, as is commonly believed by many professed Christians.
5. The congregation of the second Sabbath meeting when almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God, was largely made up of Gentiles, and it did not take place in the synagogue, as the building would not have been large enough to hold the cities' population.

☞ Paul's establishment of the Philippian church.

Acts 16:13 - 15: - “**And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted [thither]. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard [us]:** whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought [us], saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide [there]. And she constrained us.”

NOTE: - In Philippi Paul and his companions went to the place of worship outside of the city on the Sabbath day, and met with the women assembled there. He preached unto them, and Lydia who was already a worshipper of God, accepted Paul’s message, and was baptized into Christ with her household. She pressed the apostle to make her home his home during his stay in Philippi. These Sabbath-keepers were the foundation members of the Philippian church.

☞ Paul’s establishment of the Thessalonian church.

Acts 17:1 - 4: - “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, **they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,** opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. **And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.”**

NOTE: - Paul’s custom or practise was to go into the synagogue upon the Sabbath day for worship. And at Thessalonica, he reasoned with the Jews for three Sabbath days, that Jesus was the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the Christ. Some of the Jews believed, and a great number of the Greek or Gentile converts to the Hebrew faith accepted Paul’s message, and they joined themselves unto the apostles. These 7th day Sabbath-keeping converts were the foundation members of the Thessalonian church.

☞ Paul’s establishment of the Corinthian church.

Acts 18:1 - 8: - “After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. **And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.** And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, **Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews [that] Jesus [was] Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook [his] raiment, and said unto them, Your blood [be] upon your own heads; I [am] clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain [man’s] house, named Justus, [one] that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”**

NOTE: - Several important facts can be drawn from this passage: -

1. Paul worked during the week at his trade of Tent-making; and then **every Sabbath day** he worshipped in the synagogue, and reasoned to the worshippers assembled there.
 2. Some of the congregation, which was made of both Jews and Greeks – Gentiles, were persuaded by Paul’s preaching of Christ.
 3. When Paul was impressed by the Holy Spirit to testify to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, they rose up in opposition to the apostle’s message.
 4. Paul then went to the Gentiles, and went into the house of Justus, a man who worshipped God – a Gentile convert to the Hebrew faith. His house was adjoining the synagogue.
 5. Crispus who was the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with his household, and they were baptized with many of the Corinthians.
 6. These 7th day Sabbath-keepers were the foundation members of the Corinthian church.
- **Evidence 6:** - The silence in the New Testament epistles written by the apostle Paul to the various churches concerning the 7th day Sabbath, is often interpreted by those Christians who observe the first day of the week as “proof” that Sunday, the so called “Christian Sabbath”, had displaced the 7th day Sabbath among the apostolic Christians. But in light of the plain and abundant Biblical evidence which we have outlined in this study

document, the silence in these epistles is because **all the Christians and churches were 7th day Sabbath-keepers; and that it was taken for granted that all of Christ's followers observed the 7th day of the week as holy time!**