



CHURCH - Why Sundays, Scriptures, & Songs?

Why do most churches gather on Sundays if the Sabbath is really a Saturday? Why spend so much time reading & teaching from ancient writings from ancient cultures? And why do churches spend time singing songs together like some sort of big choir?

WHY SUNDAYS?

Why is it that most Churches all over the world meet on Sundays? *Seventh Day Adventists say we have this wrong*, pointing to the Jewish Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown). The Sabbath represents the day that God rested from His work on creation - the 7th day.

Exodus 20:8-11 (LEB) ⁸ "Remember the day of the **Sabbath**, to consecrate it. ⁹ Six days you will work, and you will do all your work. ¹⁰ But the seventh day *is* a Sabbath for Yahweh your God; you will not do any work—you or your son or your daughter, your male slave or your female slave, or your animal, or your alien who *is* in your gates—¹¹ because *in* six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that *is* in them, and on the seventh day he rested. Therefore Yahweh blessed **the seventh day** and consecrated it.

So if that's the command, why do we meet on Sundays instead of Saturdays?

The first followers of Jesus met together daily and highlighted Sundays to remember the most important event in human history, ***the resurrection of Jesus from the dead*** - which occurred on...**Sunday**, referred to as the 'first day of the week' (Jn 20:1), aka 'The Lord's Day' (Rev. 1:10).

John 20:19 When it was evening of that **first day of the week**, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

The Sabbath wasn't **the first day of the week**, but the 7th and last day of the week. The early church met very frequently, even daily (Acts 2:46, 5:42). As most of the early believers were Jews, they continued to use the Jewish temple courts. Paul and other Jewish followers of Jesus didn't suddenly stop going to synagogues on the Sabbath (Saturday), but used this opportunity to proclaim Jesus as the Jewish Messiah (e.g. Acts 13:14).

The earliest account of a Sunday worship gathering is found in Acts 20:7-12, as they met 'on the first day of the week.'

Acts 20:7-9 ⁷ On **the first day of the week**, we assembled to **break bread**. Paul spoke to them, and since he was about to depart the next day, he kept on talking until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were assembled, ⁹ and a young man named Eutychus was sitting on a window sill and sank into a deep sleep as Paul kept on talking. When he was overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was picked up dead.

Interesting Insights:

- The church met at night on **the first day of the week**, just like the apostles had done when Jesus first appeared to them on Resurrection Sunday (Jn. 20:19). Paul later tells the Corinthians to collect money for the persecuted church in Jerusalem when they gather "on the first day of the week" - Sundays (1 Cor. 16:2).
- They gathered to **break bread** - a term for eating a meal & remembering the payment Jesus made as He broke bread with them (communion) in a **room upstairs**...just as they were doing.
- Don't fall asleep during a sermon!

The example of the early church was to meet more often than once a week, and

The Church gathers on SUNDAYS to Remember the Resurrection of Jesus.

WHERE we meet - homes or temple courts and WHEN we meet - day or night, Saturday or Sunday, isn't as important as WHY we meet - **to Remember the Resurrection of our King.**

Something to think about: ***Why doesn't Paul stress the importance of Sabbath in any of his letters to many Gentile churches*** (e.g. Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae)? Instead, he writes this:

Colossians 2:16-17 ¹⁶ Therefore, don't let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon **or a Sabbath day**. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of what was to come; **the substance is Christ.**

The festivals, food and drink, and SABBATHS...**are a shadow of what was to come; the substance is Christ.** The focus isn't on the WHEN or WHERE or HOW, but on **WHO** *those shadows were telling us was on the way!* Our focus is on our Risen King!

So, how should Christians view the Sabbath?

- ▶ **Don't call Sunday the Sabbath...because it's not.** The Sabbath was a blessing to the Jewish people - a day to rest and thank God for His goodness. The Sabbath commands to the Jewish nation are NOT commands that the Christian must keep. If so, it would have been reiterated by the apostles (notice no mention of Sabbath keeping for Gentiles from the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15).
- ▶ **Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:37).** Physical rest one day out of the week was meant to bless and refresh people. Apply the principle to physically rest 1 day a week. Those who don't will eventually pay the price in exhaustion.
- ▶ Remember that **our spiritual rest, our peace with God, is found through the death & resurrection of Jesus.** This is the ultimate fulfillment of the OT Sabbath. We REST (or SABBATH) every day in what Jesus has done for us!

SO, why Sundays? The Church gathers on SUNDAYS to Remember the Resurrection of Jesus.

WHY SCRIPTURE?

Why do we teach from a collection of documents that are 2,000 plus years old every week?

The Scriptures Show Who God Is and What God Says.

See the previous teaching series: **Sola Scriptura** (how the Bible came to be and how to know it is trustworthy) @ **FOM.life**

God led Moses to write the first 5 books we often call the **Pentateuch** (5 vessels). In these writings God revealed His character & commands to people. These writings were held in high honor for many years. Unfortunately, the Jewish people began to take God's Words for granted, stopped obeying His commands, and suffered His discipline.

Catch the Context: When King Josiah begins to reign at age 8, God has given his people some relief from their enemies. As the child king becomes a young man and begins to seek God, reforming the nation. As the temple is repaired, the misplaced 'the Book of the Law' was found (2 Kings 22:8). When the king hears the words and understands his people have broken God's commands, he repents of his sin. Then he gathers his people and leads them to once again make a covenant with God.

2 Kings 23:1-3 LEB ¹ So the king sent *word*, and all of the elders of Judah and Jerusalem gathered to him. ² Then the king went up to the temple of Yahweh, and all of the men of Judah and all of the inhabitants of Jerusalem *were* with him, *including* the priests, the prophets, and all of the people from smallest to greatest; and in their hearing **he read all of the words of the scroll of the covenant** that had been found in the temple of Yahweh. ³ Then the king stood by the pillar, and **he made a covenant before Yahweh**, to go after Yahweh and to keep his commands and his warnings and his statutes with all of *his* heart and with all of his soul, to keep the words of this covenant written on this scroll. Then **all of the people joined in the covenant.**

Sadly, after Josiah died, the people reverted to their sinful ways and God ripped them out of Judah and allowed the temple to be destroyed. Years later, in fulfillment of God's promise, He brought them back to the land. He gave them a godly spiritual leader named Ezra. Here is his purpose statement:

Ezra 7:10 LEB ¹⁰ For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Yahweh, to do *it*, and to **teach the regulations and judgments in Israel.**

Ezra desired to **show Who God Is and What God Says.** He called the people together and read the entire Law from early morning until lunch time...while the people listened intently.

Nehemiah 8:5-6 LEB ⁵ Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, because he was above all of the people. **When he opened it all the people stood up.** ⁶ Then Ezra blessed Yahweh the great God, and all of the people answered, "Amen! Amen!" while lifting their hands. Then they bowed down and worshiped Yahweh *with their* noses to the ground. ⁷ ...and the Levites were teaching the people from the law while the people were in their places. ⁸ So they read the book from the law of God, **making it clear and giving the meaning so that they could understand the reading.**

Since the Jewish people had just returned from 70 years of captivity (a full generation) in Babylon, most who were returning to Israel had grown up speaking Aramaic, not Hebrew (although they are similar). As Ezra read in Hebrew, some of this Hebrew language needed to be interpreted and explained to those who spoke Aramaic. Ezra and the other leaders wanted people to **know who God is and what God says.**

In the New Testament the Scriptures play a prominent role in the ministry of Jesus & His apostles. Jesus often quoted and explained the Scriptures. See how Jesus honors and points to the Scriptures.

Luke 4:16–21 ¹⁶ He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. ¹⁷ The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ *The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed,* ¹⁹ *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.* ²⁰ He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, **"Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled."**

What was Jesus saying? Jesus leaves no room for doubt when He says these words at another time.

John 5:39 ³⁹ You pore over **the Scriptures** because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet **they testify about me.**

The Scriptures Show Who God Is and What God Says.

Later, Paul encourages young Timothy to continue this practice of reading and explaining the Scriptures front and center in his ministry.

1 Timothy 4:13 ¹³ Until I come, give your attention to **public reading** [of Scripture - NET, ESV, NAS, NIV] , **exhortation, and teaching.**

The **public reading** of Scripture is not specified, but *is implied*. Timothy is not reading the newspaper. This "public reading" (ἀνάγνωσις) of the biblical text was a common practice in the Jewish synagogue (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:15, 27; 15:21; 2 Cor 13:14).¹

Timothy was to **give** his **attention** to **public reading** of the OT Scriptures (and likely Paul's writings) to the churches he served. Then Timothy would **exhort & teach** from what he read, meaning he would **encourage, explain, and urge** the church to know Who God is and follow what God says.

WHY SONGS?

The OT speaks of group songs, led by musically skilled leaders (like Kenaniah). Music was such a part of Old Testament life, that one of the Scriptural writings was primarily song lyrics.

- The Hebrew title of the book - *Tehillim* - means "praises." The English title you know better is '**Psalms**' comes from Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Septuagint). The Greek word (*psalmoi*) means "songs," from which comes the idea, "songs of praises" or "praise songs."²

We see group singing in the NT as well. For example, **Jesus and the apostles** sang 'a hymn' as they finished the Passover meal.

Mark 14:26 After **singing a hymn**, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

This 'hymn' was probably **Ps 118**, 'the Hallel' (Pss 114–118) that was sung in parts during the Passover meal.³

Paul and Silas sang together while captive in prison.

Acts 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and **singing hymns to God**, and the prisoners were listening to them.

They were likely singing **lyrics from Psalms** put to music, that they had learned as young boys. New songs were being written about Jesus as well. **Pliny**, a Roman governor who persecuted Christians, wrote a letter in AD 110 that described Christians this way:

*They [Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when **they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god...***⁴

Paul writes a group of Christians and encourages them with these words.

Colossians 3:16 ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through **psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.**

¹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 261.

² *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1342.

³ James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 230.

⁴ Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996), 199.

Is that why WE sing? Do we sing **TO GOD**? Do we sing **with thankfulness...to God**? OR...are we just going through the motions?

☘ **A.W. Tozer** commented on his culture, "*Christians don't tell lies, they just go to church and sing them.*"

Jesus commented on his own culture, quoting from Isaiah

Matthew 15:8 'These people honor me with their lips, but **their hearts are far from me.**

That's hypocritical worship...saying one thing and thinking another.

Do WE ever do this when we sing? When WE sing...Are WE more concerned with **Style rather than Substance, Who is leading or Who they are leading us to, if the song blesses US...or if the song blesses God, or what others think...or do we imagine offering praises before our Savior?**

☘ **Matt Redman story behind "Here I Am to Worship"**

In the late 1990's Matt Redman's hometown church was having a dry spell with their praise and worship in Watford, England. Musical worship was becoming repetitious, & people were taking it for granted. More importantly, many people had forgotten WHY they sang together in the first place. Pastor Mike said,

"In our hearts, we were giving the worship team grades on a scale from one to ten: 'Not that song again,' 'I can't hear the bass,' 'I like the way she sings better.' We had made the band the performers of worship and ourselves the audience."

Pastor Mike asked those in the congregation, "**When you come through the doors on a Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God?**"

FEET2FAITH

1. Don't let Sundays be the only day you **Remember the Resurrection of Jesus.**

✓ **Challenge** Start your day talking to your resurrected King & live like He's alive & well.

2. Don't let Sundays be the only day you **Study God's Word to know Who He is and what He says.**

✓ **Challenge:** 1 Chapter a day at the beginning of your day. Start in John.

3. Don't let Sundays be the only day you **Sing with thankfulness to God.**

✓ **Challenge:** Roll your windows up and sing on the way to work. Walk outside and sing. Step in the shower...and sing!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What most challenged or surprised you from today's teaching?

2. How would you answer someone who asks, "Why does your church worship on Sunday instead of the true Sabbath?" (see John 20:19, Acts 20:7-9, & Rev. 1:10) Is Sunday the ONLY day Christians should meet together? Explain your answer.

3. How would you answer someone who asks, "Why does your church study a collection of documents that are 2,000-plus years old every week?" (The Bible)

4. Share about a time when you stumbled on an answer to a question as you read the Scripture. How did that impact you?

5. After looking at the Old Testament examples of Josiah & Ezra (2 Kings 22:8-23:3; Ezra 7:10; Neh. 8:5-8), how does your appreciation of the Scripture compare?

6. **Read 1 Timothy 4:13.** Rephrase what Paul told Timothy to do. Why is this so important in the life of the church today?

7. What were the 'hymns' of those in the New Testament (Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Col. 3:16)? How does it impact you to see that Christians 'a hymn to Christ, as to a god' (according to Pliny)?

8. Why is music so important in church worship? What can we do to avoid the tendency of just going through the motions, where we honor Jesus with our lips, but our hearts are far from Him (see Matt. 15:8)?

9. What do you need to do to apply what you learned to your life this week?