

## *The New Testament Era*

*(This is an excerpt from a Lunar Calendar study by John D. Keyser found on the internet)*

**NOTE: I do not agree with every conclusion presented here, but I believe the historical account of the origin of the solar calendar is accurate.**

**Some of the authors represented here believe that Israel counted the months from the visible crescent in the west and some do not count the new moon days as a third category of day. Both of these errors lead to their assumption that Israel observed their Sabbaths on the 7-14-21-28<sup>th</sup> days of the month (when the evidence in Scripture proves that they observed the Sabbath on the 8-15-22-29<sup>th</sup> days of the month). This error is easily understood and corrected by counting from the dark phase of the moon rather than the visible crescent.**

**Altogether, this is more evidence that we have been lied to. HalleluYah, you have shown your desire to examine this evidence, others apparently like living a lie. Enjoy...**

One thing is self-evident -- the [carpenter from Nazareth] had absolutely no problem with the day of the week the religious leaders of his day (the Pharisees) were observing the Sabbath on! He had plenty to say about the wall of restrictions and the dos and don'ts surrounding the Pharisees' concept of the Sabbath, and blasted them for their nit-picking and hypocrisy. But he never once corrected them over the TIMING of the Sabbath. So *when* were the Pharisees -- and the main part of the populace -- keeping the Sabbath? And, later, *when* were the early Christians keeping the Sabbath?

In the article *Shawui Sabbath: Ancient Sabbath Observance* we find written the following: "Most theologians and some scholars assume that mainstream Jewish society, at the time of Jesus...was practicing a fixed seven-day week which was the same as the *modern fixed seven-day week*. *This is extremely doubtful*. The change, from a lunar to a fixed week, was brought about by the power and influence of Rome. As long as the Nazarenes held power in Jerusalem, all Roman practices and customs, including that of THE CONSECUTIVE WEEK, WERE HELD AT BAY" (<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/3607/sabat.htm>).

This article goes on to explain that

Yahushua...observed a Sabbath, but this Sabbath was NEITHER SATURDAY NOR SUNDAY. The Nazarene Sabbath was a LUNAR Sabbath *observed on the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth day* of THE LUNAR MONTH. (A lunar month starts on the New Moon). This was standard practice among the Beni-Aumen Nazarene Order and most of the other orthodox Jewish sects of the time...Lunar Sabbath observance is an ancient Semitic custom concurrent and ante-dating the time Yahushua..." (*ibid.*).

Further, states the article, "it is a mistake to assume the ancient followers of Yahushua...kept the modern week consisting of Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. THEY DID NOT. Their week was a LUNAR WEEK which started over EACH QUARTER MOON. Most scholars agree that the modern concept of the week began in the first century and was made popular by Rome, although there is not unanimous agreement on this point."

At the time of the Messiah the observance of the weekly Sabbath was a national law for those in Judah. "All seven sects, including the Nazarenes and Osseans, observed it, although NOT ALWAYS ON THE SAME DAY. The Ben-Zadok Order appears to have observed the Sabbath on a fixed week irrespective of the lunar cycle, whereas the Beni-Aumen [Nazarenes] OBSERVED THE SABBATH ACCORDING TO THE LUNAR QUARTERS " (*ibid.*).

But what of the gentile Christians? Did this early split-off from the Nazarenes also observe a lunar Sabbath cycle? Early historical records clearly confirm that at a very early date gentile Christians ALSO KEPT THE SAME SABBATH CALENDAR AS THE NAZARENES!

In the article *Shawui Calendar: Ancient Shawui Observance*, the author expounds on the fact that "the Sabbath observed by Yahushua (Jesus) and His family, was on NEITHER A SATURDAY NOR A SUNDAY, and is calculated in a manner all together different than the modern custom of weekday observance...The method of calculating weekdays on Yahushua's calendar is at variance with the modern fixed week system. According to the...system, each week begins on either THE NEW, FIRST QUARTER, FULL MOON, or LAST QUARTER OF THE MOON."

Continuing, we read: "After the fourth lunar week of the month ends on the 28th, THE NEXT DAY OR TWO IS A DARK MOON DAY which is *not* part of any lunar week. (A new week does not begin until the following New Moon occurrence.) This may seem odd to one used to using the modern fixed week, but to the ancients it made perfect sense to pause and prepare themselves before entering and beginning a new month and a new cycle of weeks" (*ibid.*).

James Dwyer, in his article *Advanced Astronomy in Bible Texts*, writes that "the early Christian descriptions of a weekly cycle (containing periodic single days) are VERY CLEAR, and this information (coupled with evidence provided by the measurable lunar/solar phenomena) STRONGLY INDICATES THAT EARLY CHRISTIANS WERE PRACTICING A LUNAR-BASED CALENDAR" (p.42).

The same author, in another article entitled *A New Look at the Christian Sabbath*, expresses the fact that "it now seems almost certain that some additional definitions of the early Sabbath Cycle are missing from the modern tradition of the seven-day week. Essentially, the modern week -- as a continuous cycle of seven days -- does not seem to equate to the definition of the week AS IT WAS USED DURING THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA."

Writing about his article, Dwyer asserts that "this new research looks at the Sabbath calendar -- as it would have been known to a MAINSTREAM JEW LIVING IN THE SECOND TEMPLE ERA -- and it finds *the Sabbath* to have been a rather sophisticated interface *with the lunar-solar system*. In this earlier time, the Sabbath Cycle -- surprisingly -- WAS DEFINED BY THE PHASES OF THE MOON, and -- even more surprising than this -- the Sabbath Cycle also revolved into precise alignment with the annual circuit."

Later on, in the second century A.D., proof that the Jews were still keeping the Sabbath day according to the lunar week can be found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (circa 150-215 A.D.): "[Peter] inferred thus: 'Neither worship as the Jews...[for] IF THE MOON IS NOT VISIBLE, they do not hold the SABBATH, which is called *the first*; nor do they hold the NEW MOON, nor the FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, nor the FEAST, nor the GREAT DAY'" (*The Stromata*, or *Miscellanies*, chapter 5).

This clearly indicates that at this time the weekly Sabbath was still dictated by the moon's course. Further, in chapter 16 of *The Stromata*, Clement plainly writes that "in periods of SEVEN DAYS the MOON undergoes its changes. In the FIRST WEEK she becomes HALF MOON; in the SECOND [WEEK], FULL MOON; and in the THIRD [WEEK], in her wane, AGAIN HALF MOON; and in the FOURTH [WEEK] she DISAPPEARS."

This is about as plain as it can get. Obviously, in Clement's day, the week (as kept by the Jews) was still tied to the moon's phases and, by extension, the weekly Sabbath was also still tied to the moon! It appears, however, that by this time (150-215 A.D.) some of the Christians had gotten away from a week and Sabbath that was dependent upon the lunar reckoning.

### *The Christian Divorcement of the Sabbath*

In the years following Clement of Alexandria's time, an ominous change started to take place that was to radically change the Christian concept of the Sabbath. "This intimate connection," records the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, "between the week and the month was soon dissolved. It is certain that the week soon followed a development of its own, and it became the custom -- without paying any regard to the days of the month (i.e. the lunar month) -- ...so that THE NEW MOON NO LONGER COINCIDED WITH THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK" (The MacMillan Company, 1899. P. 5290).

Then, on page 4179 of the same encyclopedia, we read: "The introduction...of the custom of celebrating the Sabbath every 7th day, IRRESPECTIVE OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE DAY TO THE MOON'S PHASES, led to a complete *separation* from the ancient view of the Sabbath..."

In the article *Shawui Calendar: Ancient Shawui Observance*, we find confirmation of this radical change in YHVH Almighty's calendar --

The [lunar]...calendar was used by ALL the original disciples of Yahushua...This original Nazarene lunar-solar calendar was supplanted by a Roman "planetary week" and calendar in 135 C.E. -- when the "Bishops of the Circumcision" (i.e. legitimate Nazarene successors to Yahushua) were displaced from Jerusalem. This began a three hundred year controversy concerning the TRUE CALENDAR AND CORRECT SABBATH:

This [calendar] controversy arose after the exodus of the bishops of the circumcision and has continued until our time" (*Epiphanius*, HE4, 6, 4).

"The groundwork for this supplanting of the true calendar", suggests the ancient historian Iranaeus, "began in Rome with a Bishop Sixtus (c.a. 116-c.a.126)." According to Iranaeus, "Sixtus was the first to celebrate a Sunday Easter in Rome instead of the traditional Nisan 15 [full moon] date on the lunar calendar. This change from the lunisolar to a fixed solar calendar occurred in Rome during the repressive measures which were enacted against ALL Jewish customs and practices, INCLUDING THE LUNAR CALENDAR, during the reign of Emperor Hadrian. With the fall of the Nazarene headquarters...at Jerusalem, this new Roman calendar quickly spread throughout 'Christendom.' This NEW CALENDAR not only replaced yearly festival dates such as Passover, BUT IT ALSO REVAMPED THE CONCEPT OF THE WEEK AND ITS SEVENTH DAY."

Hutton Webster points out that "the early Christians had at first adopted the Jewish [lunar] seven-day week with its numbered weekdays, but by the close of the third century A.D. this began to give way to

*the planetary week*; and in the fourth and fifth centuries the pagan designations became generally accepted in the western half of Christendom. The use of the planetary names by Christians attests to the growing influence of astrological speculations introduced by converts from paganism” (*Rest Days: A Study in Early Law and Morality*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1916. P. 220).

It should be noted that the oldest dated Christian inscription to employ a planetary designation belongs to the year 269 A.D. (*Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae*, ed. De Rossi, 1861, i, No. 1).

In the article *Shawui Sabbath: Ancient Sabbath Observance*, the author asks these questions --

But what of Gentile Christians? Did this early break-off of true Nazarene[s]...also observe a Sabbath cycle? Early historical records clearly confirm that very early Gentile Christians also kept the same [lunar] Sabbath Calendar as the...Nazarenes. This practice was first changed by [Pope] Sixtus in 126 A.D. and later officially changed by a royal Roman decree from the emperor Constantine. Observance of the Sabbath day was made illegal and observance of a “Sunday” of a FIXED WEEK was made mandatory for all except farmers. Previous to this time the ROMAN SATURDAY was the *FIRST DAY OF THE ROMAN WEEK*. The veneration of the Sun in the second century A.D. began to pressure Roman culture to *change* the first day of their week FROM SATURNDAY TO SUNDAY. (Had the Jews been observing this same Roman calendar at this early date, as some maintain, then their seventh day Sabbath would have been on FRIDAY which was the traditional seventh day of this Roman calendar during the first century A.D.).

Hutton Webster adds that “the change from such [lunar] cycles to those UNCONNECTED WITH THE LUNATIONS would not have involved so abrupt and sudden a departure from the previous system of time reckoning as that from a bipartite division of the lunar month *to a week which ran continuously through the months and the years*” (*Rest Days*).

### ***Babylonian Rabbis Divorce the Sabbath***

While the influence of Rome caused the early Christians to adopt a continuous seven-day week with the Sabbath on every seventh day, the Jews came under a more subtle influence.

Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the Palestinian Jews struggled hard to retain control of the sacred calendar. Notes the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

The calendar was originally fixed by observation, and ultimately by calculation. Up to the fall of the Temple (A.D. 70), witnesses who saw the new moon came forward and were strictly examined and if their evidence was accepted the month *was fixed by the priests*. Eventually the authority passed to the SANHEDRIN and ultimately to the PATRIARCH. When necessary, a second “Adar” was inserted in order that the reaping of the corn should come at Passover. Gradually observation gave place to *calculation*. The right to determine the calendar was reserved to the PATRIARCHATE; the JEWS OF MESOPOTAMIA tried in vain to *establish their own calendar* but the prerogative of Palestine was zealously defended.

Continues the encyclopedia --

So long as Palestine remained a religious centre, it was naturally to the homeland that the Diaspora looked for its calendar. Uniformity was essential, for if different parts had celebrated

feasts on different days confusion would have ensued. IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE 4TH CENTURY A.D. THAT BABYLON FIXED THE CALENDAR...The Talmud speaks of *various* New Year's Days. It may be regarded as certain that in Palestine the New Year [Rosh Hoshana] began in NISSAN (cf. Exod. xii. 2) and IN BABYLON in TISHRI (volume 4, article "Calendar").

What is not realized by many is that control of the calendar implied ultimate POLITICAL AUTHORITY in Judaism. In other words, whoever controlled the calendar also controlled the destiny of the Jewish people -- for good or for evil!

"In the period after 70 C.E." writes Herschel Shanks, "THE RABBIS ABROGATED THIS AUTHORITY TO THEMSELVES. In the story that appears in the Talmudim, Rabbi Hananiah, an emigre Judean scholar, tried to assert the SUPREMACY OF BAYLONIAN JEWRY by asserting its right (that is, *his own right while in Babylonia*) to intercalate the calendar. His attempt was unsuccessful because it was SEVERAL CENTURIES TOO EARLY. This authority remained for some time with the rabbis in the land of Israel" (*Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, p. 197).

Notes Shanks --

All this BEGAN TO CHANGE IN THE THIRD CENTURY C.E. Ultimately the rabbis of Babylonia themselves cited, in retrospect, the return of one of their own, Rav (Abba), to Babylonia in 219 C.E., as the BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA in the relative status of the two great Jewish communities: "We have made ourselves [or, consider ourselves] in Babylonia like Eretz Israel -- from when Rav went down to Babylonia." While this may seem to telescope a long drawn out process into one identifiable event, the fact is that the date designated in that statement indeed POINTS ACCURATELY TO THE EARLY THIRD CENTURY, when Babylonia's star began to rise (*ibid.*, p. 262).

While the control of the calendar remained in the hands of the Palestinian Jews it was inviolate; but when control passed to the Babylonian Jews events transpired that affected the calendar and the keeping of YHVH Almighty's true Sabbath day. The environment that brought this about is discussed by Herschal Shanks in the following pages of his book --

As we enter the third century, we find that the Jews of Babylonia have at their head an EXILARCH (resh galuta, "HEAD OF THE DIASPORA") with [false] claims to Davidic lineage...But the exilarchate did not rule the Babylonian Jewish communities single-handedly. Alongside the exilarch a new framework of leadership -- THE RABBIS OF BABYLON -- emerged.

Continues Shanks:

If the rabbis of Babylonia were PRUDENT in their relationship with the exilarch, they were EVEN MORE CAUTIOUS in defining and publicly stating their attitude toward the GOVERNMENT. As we have already noted, it is in Babylonia [not Palestine] that we encounter the well-formulated principle that "THE LAW OF THE GOVERNMENT IS LAW" (*ibid.*, pp. 263-264).

Shanks brings out the fact that there were very marked differences in the ATTITUDE TOWARD GOVERNMENT and the preservation of Jewish religion and life between the Palestinian and

Babylonian Jews. The Palestinian Jews jealously guarded their religion and way of life while the Babylonian Jews were clearly willing to accommodate the government of their area and COMPROMISE certain principles they held. This included the Sabbath day.

During this time a major revival of the Zoroastrian religion took place (226 A.D.) when the first Sassanian King, Ardeshir, came to the Persian throne. He made reforms to the old lunar-based calendar that had a far-reaching effect on his people (especially the Jews) who initially rejected his new calendar since it affected their religious observances. This resulted, for a while, in TWO CALENDARS, one decreed by the king and the other, older one, followed by the majority of the people in the Kingdom. Eventually, however, the new calendar won out and the Persians, as well as the Jews of Babylonia, began to organize their sabbaths according to the new solar calendar.

In the early centuries of the Christian era many Christians became confused over the proper date for Passover. This is made clear by the early 5th century church historian Socrates Scholasticus (born circa 379 A.D. in Constantinople) in his *Ecclesiastical History* –

...In Asia Minor most people kept the fourteenth day of the moon, DISREGARDING THE SABBATH: yet they never separated from those who did otherwise, until Victor, bishop of Rome, influenced by too ardent a zeal, fulminated a sentence of excommunication against the Quartodecimans in Asia. Wherefore also Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in France, severely censured Victor by letter for his immoderate heat; telling him that although the ancients differed in their celebration of Easter [Passover], they did not desist from intercommunion. Also that Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who afterwards suffered martyrdom under Gordian, continued to communicate with Anicetus bishop of Rome, although he himself, according to the usage of his native Smyrna, kept Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon, as Eusebius attests in the fifth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*. While therefore some in Asia Minor observed the day above-mentioned, OTHERS IN THE EAST KEPT THAT FEAST ON THE SABBATH INDEED, but differed as regards the month. THE FORMER [those in Asia Minor] THOUGHT THE JEWS SHOULD BE FOLLOWED, THOUGH THEY WERE NOT EXACT: the latter kept Easter [Passover] after the equinox, REFUSING TO CELEBRATE WITH THE JEWS; “for,” said they, “it ought to be celebrated when the sun is in Aries, in the month called Xanthicus by the Antiochians, and April by the Romans.” In this practice, they averred, THEY CONFORMED NOT TO THE MODERN JEWS, WHO ARE MISTAKEN IN ALMOST EVERYTHING, BUT TO THE ANCIENTS, and to JOSEPHUS according to what he has written in the third book of his Jewish Antiquities. Thus these people were at issue among themselves. But all the other Christians in the Western parts, and as far as the ocean itself, are found to have celebrated Easter after the equinox, from a very ancient tradition (book 5, chapter 22).

Notice here that the early Christians were sharply divided over the correct date for Passover. Two ideas were prevalent: (1) That Passover should be observed on the 14th day of the moon while *disregarding* the lunar weekly Sabbath cycle. (This belief was based upon the premise that “the Jews should be followed”). However, this idea was vigorously contested by (2) “Others in the East [who] kept that feast ON THE SABBATH indeed, but differed as regards the [use of a calendar based exclusively upon the whole moon] or month.” “Based upon the Eastern practice,” notes James Dwyer, “it was believed that the then Jews WERE NOT IN COMPLETE ADHERANCE WITH MORE ANCIENT JEWISH PRACTICES” (*A New Look at the Christian Sabbath*).

“Essentially,” continues Dwyer, “one group adhered to the *practice of current Jews* (which was the determination of Passover by the 14th day of the Moon, and by a strictly lunar-based calendar). The other group adhered to a *more ancient Jewish determination* which computed the date of Passover according to the SABBATH CALENDAR (the same as the ancient Chodesh Cycle -- or fixed weeks plus renewal [or new moon] days” (*ibid.*).

This passage from Socrates Scholasticus clearly shows that the Jews had gone astray by the early 5th century and were no longer keeping the weekly Sabbath cycle (which was in tune with the moon’s phases) as ordained by YHVH Almighty in Exodus 16. The fact that “others in the East kept that feast [Passover] *on the sabbath*” indicates that this group was still keeping YHVH’s lunar weekly Sabbath calendar -- under this calendar the first high day of Passover ALWAYS fell on a weekly Sabbath (the 15th of Nisan).

### ***Saturn and the Sabbath***

Talking about the time prior to the Diaspora, Hutton Webster tells us that

an old and still common theory derives the Sabbath institution from the worship of SATURN after which planet the *first day* of the astrological week [Saturday] received its designation. The theory is untenable for more than one reason. In the first place the Hebrews did not name their weekdays after the planets, but indicated them by ordinal numbers. In the second place SATURN’S DAY [SATURDAY] BEGAN THE PLANETARY WEEK, while the Jewish Sabbath was regarded as the LAST DAY of the seven, a suitable position for a rest day. And in the third place neither the Hebrews nor any other Oriental people ever worshipped the planet Saturn as a god and OBSERVED HIS DAY AS A FESTIVAL (*Ibid.*, p. 243).

However, in the Diaspora, this soon changed with the influence of the Zoroastrian revival and the Roman planetary week:

These imported [from Babylon] superstitions eventually led Jewish rabbis to call Saturn SHABBTI, “the STAR OF THE SABBATH,” [and]...*it was not until [after]the first century of our era*, when the planetary week had become an established institution, THAT THE JEWISH SABBATH SEEMS ALWAYS TO HAVE CORRESPONDED TO SATURN’S DAY [SATURDAY]” (*ibid.*, p. 244).

“*The association of the Sabbath Day with Saturday*,” explains Webster, “was probably one reason why Saturn, a planet in Babylonian astrological schemes regarded as beneficent rather than malefic, should have come to assume in late classical times the role of an unlucky star (sidus tristissimum, stella iniquissima)...Dio Cassius [Roman historian born 155 A.D., died after 230 A.D.] also speaks of the Jews having DEDICATED TO THEIR MIGHTY ONE THE DAY CALLED THE DAY OF SATURN [SATURDAY], ‘on which, among many other most peculiar actions, they undertake no serious occupation’...Tacitus [another Roman historian] (Historiae, V, 4) thinks that the Jewish Sabbath may be an observance in honour of Saturn...” (*Rest Days*, p. 244-245).

Notes the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*: “With the development of the importance of the Sabbath as a day of consecration and the emphasis laid upon the significant number seven, the week became more and more DIVORCED FROM ITS LUNAR CONNECTION...”(volume 10, 1943. Article, “Week,” p. 482).

Also, writes Hutton Webster, “the establishment of a periodic week ending in a Sabbath observed every seventh day was doubtless responsible for the gradual obsolescence of the NEW MOON FESTIVAL AS A PERIOD OF GENERAL ABSTINENCE, since with continuous weeks the new-moon day and the Sabbath Day would from time to time coincide” (*ibid.*, p. 255).

This obsolescence of the New Moon festival is also noted by the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* --

However, in the Diaspora the New Moon came to occupy a secondary position in contrast to the Sabbath; the prohibition against work and the carrying on of commerce was LIFTED, and the New Moon, although still celebrated by means of increased offerings, soon was *reduced* to the rank of a *minor of half holiday*. Its importance was confined to the fact that it remained of great value and necessity for the fixing of the festivals (volume 8, p. 171. Article “New Moon”).

Eviator Zerubavel, in his book *The Seven Day Circle: The History and Meaning of the Week*, observes that

The Jewish and and astrological weeks evolved quite independently of one another. However, given the coincidence of their identical length, it was only a matter of time before some permanent correspondence between particular Jewish days and particular planetary days would be made. A PERMANENT CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE SABBATH AND “THE DAY OF SATURN” WAS THUS ESTABLISHED...[some time] later than the first century of the present era, Jews EVEN CAME TO NAME THE PLANET SATURN SHABTAI, AFTER THE ORIGINAL HEBREW NAME OF THE SABBATH, SHABBATH. Moreover, as they came into closer contact with Hellenism, their conception of their holy day was evidently AFFECTED BY THE ASTROLOGICAL CONCEPTION OF SATURN AS A PLANET that has an overwhelming negative influence (a conception which, incidentally, is still evident even from the association of the English word “saturnine” with a gloomy disposition). There are traditional Jewish superstitious beliefs about demons and evil spirits that hold full sway on the Sabbath, and an old Jewish legend even links the *choice* of “the day of Saturn” as the official Jewish rest day with the superstition that it would be an inauspicious day for doing any work anyway! (New York: The Free Press, 1985. P. 17).

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Troy Miller**

[www.creationcalendar.com](http://www.creationcalendar.com).