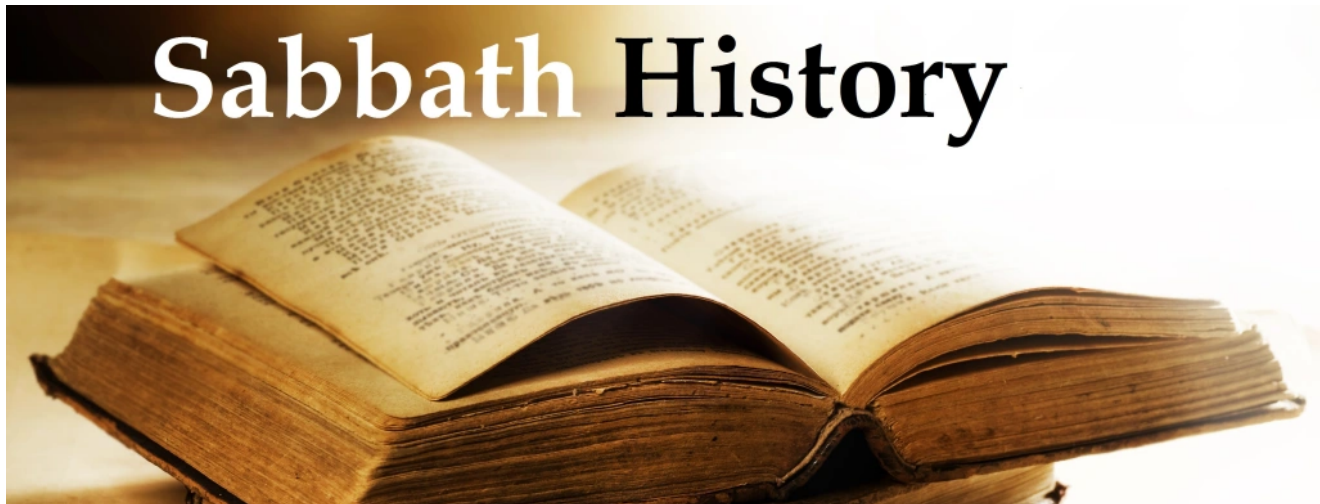


March 7, 321 AD – Constantine’s Sunday Law

sabbathsentinel.org/2016/10/13/constantine-march-321-ad

October 13, 2016



March 7, 321 AD – Constantine’s Sunday Law

by Kelly McDonald, Jr.

On March 7 321 AD, Constantine approved the “day of the sun” as a day of rest for the Western Roman Empire (at this time, he did not control the Eastern Empire). This was not to honor God or Jesus Christ, but to honor the sun god. Sunday became a civil day of rest for urban areas, but the law did not grant rest to farmers. Below I have provided an English translation from the Codex Justinianus (which was issued in 529 AD).

“All judges and city people and the craftsmen shall rest upon the venerable day of the sun. Country people, however, may freely attend to the cultivation of the fields, because it frequently happens that no other days are better adapted for planting the grain in the furrows or the vines in trenches. So that the advantage given by heavenly providence may not for the occasion of a short time perish.” (Codex Justinian 3.12.2: Emperor Constantinus; Translation from Ayer, 284-285)

In the Latin, the phrase translated as “venerable day of the sun” is *venerabili die solis*. Constantine’s decision was based upon honoring and esteeming the celestial body we call the sun. The Mithras cult was a favorite for Roman Emperors, especially Constantine. He minted coins as late as the 320s AD honoring Sol Invictus, the invincible sun god (Encyclopedia Britannica “Mithras”, Cath. Encycl. “Constantine the Great”). On some of these coins, he was crowned by Sol (see Sear, pp 363-491). Notice in Constantine’s decree that farmers were not allowed this day off of work. It applied to those in the cities, not the country.

The God of the Holy Bible commanded Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) off for all people, regardless of their occupation. This command extends even to farmers in their busiest seasons (Ex. 34:21).

While Constantine's decree did not change the Sabbath, it created a false, civil day of rest beside the true day of rest. It also did not force any sort of worship on the subjects of the Empire. He issued another one in July of the same year that allowed slaves to have the day off from work (CT: 2.8.1).

The Catholic Encyclopedia states: "...many of the emperors yielded to the delusion that they could unite all their subjects in the adoration of the one sun-god who combined in himself the Father-God of the Christians and the much-worshipped Mithras; thus the empire could be founded anew on unity of religion. Even Constantine, as will be shown farther on, for a time cherished this mistaken belief... Many other actions of his also have the appearance of half-measures, as if he-himself had wavered and had always held in reality to some form of syncretistic religion..." (Article: Constantine the Great)

Constantine took other measures to impose a state-controlled religion, but this is one example of how people began to change God's sacred timing. Constantine passed a second law just a few months after this. There's a link below where you can learn more.

For more commentary on Constantine and the effects of this March 7, 321 law, please click [HERE](#) – Did Constantine Change the Sabbath?

To read Constantine's second Sunday law, [click HERE](#) – Constantine's Second Sunday Law

Kelly is President of the Bible Sabbath Association (BSA) www.biblesabbath.org

Works Cited:

Ayer, Joseph Cullen. A Sourcebook for Ancient History. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1913. pp 284-285

Catholic Encyclopedia 1911: Constantine the Great, Mithras

Sear, David. Roman Coins and their Values, Volume IV. Spink, London, 2011. Pp 233-264, 363-491.

CONSTANTINE DECREES “SUN-DAY” AS DAY OF REST INSTEAD OF SATURDAY IN YEAR 321

factsandhistory.com/constantine-decrees-sun-day-as-day-of-rest-instead-of-saturday-on-march-7-321

July 17, 2019



On this day in the year 321, Constantine decreed “the day of the sun” as a day of rest.

Roman Emperor Constantine I, known in history as Constantine the Great, may be considered one of the most influential rulers of antiquity, and can claim the greatest impact on modern society of any Roman leader. For it was Constantine who was instrumental in converting the Roman Empire to Christianity, and who therefore shaped the cultural and religious destiny of Europe and beyond.

His adoption of the Christian faith during his thirty-year reign as Emperor is shrouded in mystery. He did not declare himself a Christian until a relatively advanced age, and was supposedly only baptised on his deathbed. But his leadership was defined by a gradual process of accommodating and promoting the religion that had for so long been oppressed.

In 313, Constantine made a hugely significant pronouncement, in the Edict of Milan, that stated citizens should be allowed to practice the religion of their choice, and specifically banned the subjugation of Christian worshippers. The announcement was backed up by direct action, as the Roman government returned property to the Church that had been confiscated under previous regimes.

From this point on, Constantine became a great patron of the Church, diverting vast sums to church-building projects and defending the rights of Christians. Although the Roman Empire continued to be dominated by polytheist tradition for many years, the hegemony of polytheism was challenged, enabling the Christian faith to gain a foothold, and eventually leading to the supremacy of the Christian faith over polytheism.

The gradual process towards Christian tradition and ritual was underscored in 321, when, on the 7th of March, Constantine decreed that dies Solis, or “the day of the sun,” should be observed as a universal day of rest. The pious observance of the Sabbath was important in expressing thanks for God’s toil. Previously all Christians worshiped on Saturday the Seventh day of the week.

Constantine chose Sunday to be the day for Christian worship as it already enjoyed special status in the Roman week. Named after the Pagan Sun God Invictus, Sunday had become the day when wages were traditionally paid to workers, leading it to be seen as a day of celebration and thanks. In corresponding the Christian Sabbath with an already established day of rest, Constantine ensured that his decree would be accepted swiftly and harmoniously.

In all major Christian denominations, Sunday continues to be observed as a holy day, remaining the day of choice for church attendance. For other religions the Sabbath still falls on Saturday and for many, Sundays are seen as normal working days.