

The Secrets Of Happy Living

Because I'm a Christian

THERE ARE MANY THINGS I do, and many I refrain from doing, because I'm a Christian. Withal, I am fully persuaded that because I have seriously accepted the invitation to follow Jesus, He is leading me, as He led David, "in the paths of righteousness for His names sake." Psalm 23:3. This, I confess to His praise and glory, is wholly His doing, not mine.

Although there might be some who swiftly will raise diverse and devious objections to the matter, I am constrained to mention one particular thing my Lord has led me to do for Him, and in which I have been most blessed indeed. He promised a blessing to all who should do this for Him, and in this He has kept faith with me.

What is this that I do for Jesus? It is this-because I'm a Christian, I keep holy God's Sabbath! Let me mention the gospel reasons why Keep the Sabbath.

The opening words of "The Gospel According to St. John" declare Christ to be none other than the almighty Creator. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:1-4, 14.

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So then, the beautiful gospel story of the babe born in Bethlehem's manger introduces us to the beginning of Christ's humble sojourn among men, when for the sake of sinners He was willing to live in our midst and atone for our sins. But the brief interval between Bethlehem and Calvary does not compass His existence! After Calvary came His resurrection, and before Bethlehem He was with God, and He was God. As Micah said of Bethlehem, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2.

As we go back into the days of eternity, we arrive at a point of time many centuries before Bethlehem, when this earth did not exist. Then, about 4,000 years before Christ, a divine Being summoned the matter of this system into existence. Whose mind was the genius that planned and executed the mighty feat? The gospel says it was Jesus Christ's.

"But unto the Son He said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." "Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Your hands." Hebrews 1:8,10. "For by Him [i.e. by His dear Son] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him." Colossians 1:16.

Therefore, when in Exodus 20:11 we read, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is," the gospel declares that we are reading explicitly of Christ's creative act. Now the record affirms that this Lord, Jesus Christ, who in six days created all, did something else at the same time. He "rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:11. It was Jesus who did this.

So then ' when Israel gathered at the foot of Sinai and heard the words of the fourth commandment, the Sabbath commandment, they actually were hearing of the wonderful works and power of Jesus. To them was being preached the gospel!

Speaking simply and plainly, it is because Jesus made this world in six days, and because Jesus rested on the seventh day, and Himself hallowed and blessed it, that I keep the Sabbath. Sabbath-keeping is an act of worship which Jesus instituted in honor of His special work as our Creator.

In vivid words the gospel further emphasizes this. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him. For the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:6, 7.

Thus the Scriptures plainly state that in the gospel is involved the special call to worship Christ AS CREATOR. In the celebration of Holy Communion we worship Him in His role of Savior and Sacrifice. In keeping the Sabbath we worship Him as Creator.

Because the gospel declares Christ is the Creator, I keep the Sabbath. There is another gospel reason why I keep the Sabbath. "These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent." John 17:1-3.

It has been God's eternal purpose to lead men to Himself, for in so doing man is delivered from every evil, and is instructed in the ways of righteousness. The earliest hours of human history were adorned with the satisfying fellowship of the Divine Being with Adam in the garden home. Sin, while it placed man in the position of estrangement from a holy God, did not lessen God's desire for fellowship with man. God took steps to free those of sin who desired such a release, thus enabling them to enjoy the fellowship of God once more. Enoch, for instance, "walked with God."

The very same experience is described in the gospel. "He that bath My commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me. And he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. John 14:21, 23.

The sum and circumference of Christian experience is in knowing God. When because of repentance and conversion we are justified, we are, as it were, initially introduced to God. As we experience sanctification we are drawn closer into the Divine fellowship and get to know Him better. The blessings and satisfactions of this fellowship have been afforded to men of all ages who have had faith in the Lord. It has always been part of the everlasting gospel.

God declares that it is by means of the hallowed Sabbath institution that man is reminded of this

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wonderful gospel reality. I am the Lord your God; walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them; and hallow My Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.” Ezekiel 20:19, 20. In and through the gospel we can know God. Because I cherish the fellowship of the Father and Son, I keep God’s Sabbath.

With thousands of others I have discovered that chief among the blessings of keeping the Sabbath is that it affords time and opportunity to know God. Those who “remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” spend the sacred hours in spiritual pursuits. They devote one day each week wholly to the Lord. In the interests and activities of that blessed day they acquaint themselves with Jesus. It is a day that offsets those ever-increasing pressures towards secularism which are eating away the spiritual life of millions.

I have never known any converted Christian who has commenced really keeping God’s Sabbath holy who has not found a richer, fuller, more satisfying fellowship with his Lord as a result. That’s the way the Lord said it would be: “Hallow My Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.”

But there is also another gospel reason why I keep the Sabbath. “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12,13. Confirming this, Paul exclaimed, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:16,17.

Paul, having sat at the feet of no less a scholar than Gamaliel, was well aware of the philosophies and religions of his day. From the pens of the great Greek and Roman philosophers, and in the sacred books of the Eastern religions he had become conversant with the noblest as well as the not-so-noble ideas they propounded. Yet there was something lacking in the philosophy and religion of paganism. In Paul’s day, as in ours, paganism had thrust upon the world little but immorality and evil. There was a difference with the gospel. It introduced to all who, with true faith accepted it in its purity, grace and strength to live a righteous life of virtue and joy. Jesus in reality was a Savior from sin. The pagan concept was and still is, “Man is able to save himself.” The gospel truthfully declares this to be an impossibility. It says, “JESUS saves.”

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto all good works.” Ephesians 2:10. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will takeaway the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them.” Ezekiel 36:25-27.

Who does this? Jesus the wonderful Savior. He saves His people from their sins. “Moreover also I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Ezekiel 20:12. So, then, God intended the Sabbath to protect the central truth of the gospel, that man is not his own Savior, but that Jesus alone is.

I am a Christian who believes the gospel. I believe that Jesus Christ is the mighty Creator, as the gospel affirms. I accept the Father and the Son to be the true God, as the gospel says of Them. I know that Jesus is the true and only Savior, and I have accepted Him as such, and given my heart to Him as the gospel invites me to.

These are the reasons my God commands me to keep His Sabbath holy, and for these reasons I gladly obey.