

## 7. Christ and the Sabbath

THOSE who oppose the Bible Sabbath center their attack on three points, claiming (1) that the Sabbath was not instituted at creation, and hence is not an original law for the whole human family; (2) that the Sabbath commandment is not a moral command as the other nine, but was a part of the Jewish ceremonial law; (3) that Christ or the apostles abolished the Sabbath, and gradually substituted the first day of the week in its place. We shall now test these propositions one by one.

### The Sabbath An Edenic Institution

God the Father has always worked through His Son, both in creation and in redemption. (Genesis 1: 26; Hebrews 1: 1, 2, 8-10; John 3: 16) Therefore it was Christ who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day. "All things were made by Him - and without Him was not any thing made that was made. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." John 1: 3, 10. (Compare Colossians 1: 14-18) It is a great comfort to a poor, weak sinner to know that our Saviour is "the Mighty God" (Isaiah 9: 6) who spoke the worlds into existence (Psalm 33: 6, 9), and who is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1: 3). His word has creative power, and if we receive it by faith, it will change our hearts and lives, and give us victory over sin. (John 1: 12; Genesis 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4: 5, 6; Matthew 5: 16; Isaiah 60: 1)

As the crowning act on the sixth day, the Lord made man in His own image, and then He "rested on the seventh day" from a "finished" work.. (Genesis 1: 27, 31; 2:1-3) Thus the seventh day stood as a memorial and reminder of a finished work in Christ. And when man lost the image of God through sin,

Christ came to restore in man that divine image by a new creation. (Colossians 3: 10; Ephesians 4: 24; 2: 10; 2 Corinthians 5: 17.) On the cross He cried out: "It is finished." John 19: 30. (See Hebrews 10:14.) This was on Friday evening, and He rested the Sabbath day from the work of redemption, just as He had originally rested on it from the work of creation. (Luke 23: 52-56.) Thus the seventh-day Sabbath is Christ's memorial of redemption as well as of the creation. (Ezekiel 20: 12; Hebrews 13: 8. See "The Great Controversy," p. 769.) And both events were for the whole human race, and not for the Jews only.

Christ says: " The Sabbath was made for man." Mark 2: 27. And therefore it was made when man was created. "So God created man in His own image . . . . And the evening and the morning were the sixth day . . . . And He rested on the seventh day. . . . And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Genesis 1: 27, 31; 2: 2, 3. This was two thousand years before Abraham (the first Jew) was born, therefore the Sabbath could not be Jewish. But, as Christ says, it was, " made for man," and the term "man" is not confined to any one race, but embraces all mankind.

We are not alone in believing that the Sabbath was instituted at creation, as the following quotations from leading men in different denominations show:

F. C. Cook, M. A., Canon of Exeter, says:

“ ‘And God blessed the seventh day.’ The natural interpretation of these words is that the blessing of the Sabbath was immediately consequent on the first creation of man, for whom the Sabbath was made

(Mark 2: 27). It has been urged from the silence concerning its observance by the patriarchs, that no Sabbath ordinance was really given until the promulgation of the law, and that this passage in Genesis is not historical but anticipatory. There are several objections, which seem fatal to this theory.” - *"The Holy Bible, with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary by Bishops and Clergy of the Anglican Church," Vol. I, p. 37. New York: 1875.*

Thomas Hamilton, D. D., in his Five-Hundred-Dollar Prize Essay, meets this objection to the historicity of Genesis in the following forceful way:

" Palsy . . . says: 'The words [of Genesis 2: 1-3] do not assert that God then blessed and sanctified the seventh day.' . . . But such an interpretation really amounts to an interpolation. It alters the passage. . . . Once admit such a mode of dealing with Scripture, or of dealing with any other book, and we may bid farewell to certainty regarding any author's meaning. . . . No history could stand if subjected to such treatment. The plainest and most unvarnished statements might be so twisted and distorted as to bear a meaning the exact contrary to that intended by its author. . . .

"It is not only said God 'rested,' but He 'blessed,' the day and 'sanctified' it. . . . If all this do [sic.] not amount to the institution of a weekly Sabbath for man in all time coming. . . . we fail to see what intelligible meaning or purpose is to be extracted from the narrative." - *"Our Rest Day," pp. 10-15, New edition. Edinburgh: 1888.*

Dr. Martin Luther says on this text:

"God blessed the Sabbath and sanctified it to Himself. It is moreover to be remarked that God did this to no other creature. God did not sanctify to Himself the heaven nor the earth nor any other creature. But God did sanctify to Himself the seventh day. This was especially designed of God, to cause us to understand that the 'seventh day' is to be especially devoted to divine worship. . . .

"it follows therefore from this passage, that if Adam had stood in his innocence and had not fallen he would yet have observed the 'seventh day' as sanctified, holy and sacred. . . . Nay, even after the fall he held the 'seventh day' sacred; that is, he taught on that day his own family. This is testified by the offerings made by his two sons, Cain and Abel. The Sabbath therefore has, from the beginning of the world, been set apart for the worship of God. . . . For all these things are implied and signified in the expression 'sanctified.'

“Although therefore man lost the knowledge of God by sin, yet God willed that this command concerning the sanctifying of the Sabbath should remain. He willed that on the seventh day both the word should be preached, and also those other parts of His worship performed which He Himself instituted.” - *"Commentary on Genesis," Vol. I, pp. 138-140, translation by Professor J. N. Lenker, D. D., Minneapolis: 1901; and also "Copious Explanation of Genesis," Vol. I, pp. 62, 68. Christiania: 1863.*

The following words from a distinguished Hebrew scholar are worthy of note here:

""Finished.' To finish a work, in Hebrew conception, is to cease from it, to have done with it. On the seventh day. The seventh day is distinguished from all the preceding days by being itself the subject of the narrative. In the absence of any work on this day, the Eternal is occupied with the day itself, and does four things in reference to it. First, He ceased from His work which He had made. Secondly, He

rested. . . . Thirdly, He blessed the seventh day. . . . In the fourth place, He hallowed it or set it apart to a holy rest. . . .

"The present record is a sufficient proof that the original institution was never forgotten by man. . . .

"Incidental traces of the keeping of the Sabbath are found in the record of the Deluge, when the sacred writer has occasion to notice short intervals of time. The measurement of time by weeks then appears (Genesis 8: 10, 12). The same division of time again comes up in the history of Jacob (Genesis 29: 27, 28). This unit of measure is traceable to nothing but the institution of the seventh-day rest. *"A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis with a New Translation," J. G. Murphy, D. D., T. C. D. (Professor of Hebrew, Belfast), pp. 70,71 . Andover: 1866.*

Dr. J. P. Lange says: "The expression, He hallowed it, must be for man, for all men who were to be on the earth.

" If we had no other passage than this of Genesis 2: 3 there would be no difficulty in deducing from it a precept for the universal observance of a Sabbath, or the seventh day, to be devoted to God, as holy time, by all of that race for whom the earth and its nature were especially prepared. The first man must have known it. The words 'He hallowed it,' can have no meaning otherwise. They would be a blank unless in reference to some who were required to keep it holy." - *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, John Peter Lange, D. D., Vol. I, pp. 196, 197. New York: 1884.*

Dr. M. W. Jacobus, Professor George Bush, and C. O. Rosenius, and others forcefully emphasize the same facts. The preceding statements taken from leading men in different denominations need no comment. They state the plain facts of the Bible narrative in their most natural setting.

Another remarkable thing in this connection is the fact that the heathen nations for centuries after the days of Noah retained the seventh-day Sabbath. The learned Dr. John Kitto says:

"We find from time immemorial the knowledge of a week of seven days among all nations - Egyptians, Arabians, Indians - in a word, all the nations of the East, have in all ages made use of this week of seven days, for which it is difficult to account without admitting that this knowledge was derived from the common ancestors of the human race." - *Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature, Vol. II, art. "Sabbath," p. 655.*

Professor A. H. Sayce declares:

"The Sabbath-rest was a Babylonian, as well as a Hebrew, institution. Its origin went back to pre-Semitic days. . . . In the cuniform tablets the Sabattu is described as 'a day of rest for the soul,' . - it was derived by the Assyrian scribes from two Sumerian or pre-Semitic words, sa and bat, which meant respectively 'heart' and 'ceasing.' . . . The rest enjoined on the Sabbath was thus as complete as it was among the Jews." - *"Higher Criticism and the Monuments," pp. 74, 75.*

During their servitude in Egypt, the majority of the Jews evidently worked on the Sabbath, just as the rank and file of the Jews do today, but the knowledge of it was retained then as now, and it was kept holy by a faithful few. Besides other evidences, we see this is from the fact that, thirty days after they left Egypt, and more than two weeks before the law was given on Sinai, God tested the people on Sabbath-keeping (Exodus 16: 4, 27, 28), which He certainly could not have done, if the Sabbath had not been known among them till the law was given on Sinai. Then, too, God speaks of it as a familiar

institution. (Compare Exodus 16:28 with Genesis 26:5 and 2:3) The fourth commandment itself points back to creation and commands us to "remember the Sabbath day" on which He rested at the close of creation week. (Exodus 20:8,11) No human logic can therefore explain away the historical facts that the Sabbath was set apart for man at creation.

## **The Sabbath Moral Or Typical?**

Some claim that the Sabbath commandment does not enforce the observance of the seventh day of the week, but only the seventh part of our time, the particular day being left to our choice. But nothing could be more contradictory to the plain wording of the commandment. If God's commands and promises are to be so construed as to mean the very opposite of what they state, then we may bid farewell to all certainty and comfort derived from the Scriptures. God commands us to keep, not a seventh, but the seventh, day, on which He rested, the day He blessed and sanctified. (Exodus 20:10,11) The Sabbath rests on a historical event that cannot be changed to another day, any more than our birthday can be changed.

In regard to the claim that the Sabbath commandment is not moral as the other nine, but ceremonial, it needs only to be said that there is no statement to that effect in the whole Bible, and it would involve its advocates in the most serious difficulty. All through the Bible a clear distinction is maintained between the two laws, the moral and the ceremonial. God spoke the Ten Commandments to the people directly, "and He added no more" (Deuteronomy 5: 22); He engraved them on two tables of stone (Exodus 32:16; Deuteronomy 9: 10); and had them laid in the ark" (Deuteronomy 10:5; 1 Kings 8: 9). But the ceremonial law of ordinances was spoken to the people by Moses, was written by him "in a book," and laid beside the ark. (Exodus 21: 1; 24: 3, 4, 7; Deuteronomy 31: 24-26.<sup>1</sup>) Now we respectfully ask: Would any one claim that God did not understand the difference between moral and ceremonial laws, and hence wrote a ceremonial command into the very bosom of His moral law, the Decalogue? Such an accusation of God would be preposterous, and yet, this is what the above claim necessarily implies! We must therefore conclude that all the Ten Commandments are moral, which practically all the leading religious denominations teach in their confessions of faith.

## **Did Christ Change The Sabbath?**

Christ came to lift people out of the degradation of sin, not to leave them in sin. He received the name "JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." Matthew 1: 21. And sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3: 4. The law here referred to is the moral law of the Ten Commandments. (Romans 7: 7, 12; James 2: 10, 1 L) Christ firmly refuted the idea that He was to abolish any part of God's law. He says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law. . . . For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." Matthew 5: 17, 18. Christ was to "magnify the law, and make it honorable." Isaiah 42: 21. And this He did, for He freed it from all the traditions and additions of men. (Matthew 15: 3, 6, 9, 13) The Pharisees had burdened down the Sabbath with hundreds of man-made regulations. All these Jesus swept away, and restored it to its original purpose, that it should be a blessing, a sacred "delight" to God's people. (Isaiah 58: 13) But He never made any change in the day. He kept it Himself, and taught His followers to do the same. (Luke 4: 16, 31; Matthew 24: 20; 12: 11, 12.)

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<sup>1</sup> The English and American Revised Versions, the Jewish, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish versions render Deuteronomy 31: 26, "by the side of the ark." Others render it "at the side of the ark," and "beside the ark."

The Lord gave His Sabbath to man as a weekly reminder of Christ's sanctifying and keeping power, because man needed this reminder. (Ezekiel 20: 12) But Satan has always tried to blot out all memory of the true God from the earth, and to draw man's allegiance and worship to himself through idolatry. (1 Corinthians 10:20) He has therefore made relentless efforts to pull down God's Sabbatic flag, and to trample it in the mire. We have seen that for a long time after the descendants of Noah had dispersed over the earth they retained the knowledge of the Sabbath. This was true even after they went into idolatry. Egypt was the first among the heathen nations to attempt to suppress the seventh-day Sabbath, and influenced other nations to regard the first day as the weekly holiday of their sun-god. Truels Lund gives us the following information on this important and interesting subject of the week in Egypt, in his extensive work:

"According to the Assyrian-Babylonian conception, the particular stress lay necessarily upon the number seven. . . . The whole week pointed prominently towards the seventh day, the feast day, the rest day, in this day it collected, in this it also consummated. 'Sabbath' is derived from both 'rest' and 'seven.' With the Egyptians it was the reverse. . . . For them on the contrary the sun-god was the beginning and origin of all things. The day of the Sun, Sunday, therefore, became necessarily for them the feast day. . . . The holiday was transferred from the last to the first day of the week." - *"Daglige Liv i Norden," Vol. XIII, pp. 54, 55.*

"The seven planetary names of the days were at the close of the second century A. D., prevailing everywhere in the Roman Empire. . . . This astrology originated in Egypt, where Alexandria now so loudly proclaimed it to all. . . . 'The day of the Sun' was the Lord's day, the chiefest and first of the week. The evil and fatal Saturn's day was the last of the week, on which none could celebrate a feast. . . .

"From Rome, through the Roman legionaries, the seven planetary days pressed farther north to Gaul, Britain, and Germany. Everywhere . . . people yielded respectfully to the astrology in its popular form: the doctrine concerning the Sun-day with its fortune, the Moon-day with its alternative play, and the filthy, unlucky Saturday. . . . As a concentrated troop the planetary appellations and names of heathen deities stood on guard, when later Christianity reached Europe, and attempted to displace them. . . .

"For the Christians the lot was cast by the reception of the . . . day of the sun. Not till they themselves had later gained power were they awakened to doubt. . . . And the heathen names of the days seemed at variance with Christian faith." - *Id., pp. 91, 92, 110.*

The London Anglican rector, T. H. Morer, says of Sunday:

"It is not to be denied but we borrow the name of this day from the ancient Greeks and Romans, and we allow that the old Egyptians worshipped the sun, and as a standing memorial of their veneration, dedicated this day to him. And we find by the influence of their example, other nations, and among them the Jews themselves, doing him homage. *"Six Dialogues on the Lord's Day," p. 22. London: 1701.*

Thus we see how Satan, through heathenism, tried to stigmatize the Sabbath of Jehovah and to elevate Sunday as a joyful day. The Egyptians worshipped their sun-god under the name of Osiris, and the Apis bull (the golden calf made at Horeb) was a representation of him. This worship was conducted by turning to the rising sun. (Ezekiel 8: 16.) Therefore the Lord ordered the tabernacle always to be pitched with the front toward the east, so that the people, worshipping before it, had to turn their backs upon sun worship. (Numbers 3: 23. See also Exodus 26: 22; 36: 27, 32 in American Revised Version,

and Jeremiah 32:33) Talbot W. Chambers, D. D., says that sun worship was "the oldest, the most widespread, and the most enduring of all forms of idolatry known to man!"

"The universality of this form of idolatry is something remarkable. It seems to have prevailed everywhere. The chief object of worship among the Syrians was Baal - the sun . . . In Egypt the sun was the kernel of the state religion." - *"The Old Testament Student," pp. 193,194. January, 1886.*

In Babylon the sun-god was called Bel, in Phoenicia and Palestine, Baal, and Sun-day was "the wild solar holiday of all pagan times." - *"North British Review," Vol. XVIII, P. 409.*

Rev. W. H. Poole says:

"The first and principal idol was the sun - the glorious luminary of the day . . . Baal was the great sun-god of all the East. With our Israelitish ancestors the sun-god came west. His day is our Sunday. Every time you name our Sabbath-day Sunday you are reminded of our great, great, great grandfathers' principal deity." - *"Anglo-Israel in Nine Lectures," pp. 389, 890. Detroit, Mich.: 1889.*

The Encyclopedia Britannica says of the worship of Baal:

"As the sun-god he is conceived in the male principle of life and reproduction in nature, and thus in some forms of his worship is the patron of the grossest sensuality, and even of systematic prostitution. An example of this is found in the worship of Baal-Peor (Numbers 25)." - *Vol. III, (New American ed., Werner Co.), art. "Baal," p. 175.*

This sun worship was the greatest of all abominations to God (Ezekiel 8: 13-16), and the warnings to Israel have great significance to us today: "I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, saith the Lord." Hosea 2: 13. (See also 1 Corinthians 10: 11.)

When we remember that it was Christ who took Israel out of Egypt (Hebrews 11: 26, 27; 1 Corinthians 10: 4), and who labored so earnestly to turn them away from sun worship and Sunday keeping, and that it was Satan who always led them into this idolatry, we ask with all candor: Could any one suppose that Christ, in the New Testament, has exchanged places with Satan, so that He is now leading people to keep Sunday, while the devil is leading them to keep the Sabbath of Jehovah? Every thoughtful person must say with the Apostle Paul: "God forbid." Romans 3:31.