

The End of the Sabbath Day



By
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The Issue Stated

PERHAPS the most perplexing of all questions that must be honestly faced by the Bible Student today is the problem of the Sabbath Day. As in the days of Paul, when certain Judaizing missionaries were upsetting the church at Galatia, so the church today is being bombarded by false teachers. Men who would rob her of liberty in Christ, and bring her back under the bondage of the Mosaic Law are contending that the Christian must keep the Sabbath Day. The Sabbath, however, is but the shibboleth of this school of legalists. It means nothing to them that Jesus Christ died to redeem believers from the bondage of the law. Under the guise of Sabbath observers, they would bring us back under the entire Mosaic system, and thus make vain the Grace of God and frustrate the work of the Cross. To this school it is not enough that Jesus died and rose again. Not by faith alone can we be saved, if we heed their teachings. To the gospel of Grace, which is symbolized by the Cross, they would add the fatal program of works, attested by the keeping of the Sabbath Day.

There is a significant verse with which we head our discussion, beginning the 28th chapter of Matthew. The body of the Lord Jesus has been lying now for three days and three nights in Joseph's tomb. Christ is now risen from the dead, to end the reign of the law, and inaugurate

the period of Grace. Here the Holy Spirit speaks in these words, "NOW IN THE END OF THE SABBATH, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." . . . It is true that the Greek word here used, "opse," literally refers to the evening or the darkening hours that closed the day. But this text is also significant in that it marks the termination of the period during which the Sabbath day was to be observed by believers.

Which Day Is the Sabbath?

One of the major problems of our modern preaching ministry has to do with this rest period called the Sabbath. Ninety-four times in the Old Testament, Saturday, the seventh day of the week, is given as the Sabbath Day. To this must be added the fifty-eight times that the New Testament denotes this same day by this same term. We then have 152 occasions where the Word of God calls Saturday, the seventh day, the Sabbath. We can thus lay down the general rule that the seventh day, or Saturday, WAS ALWAYS a SABBATH under the rule of the Law.

At the same time we must carefully read our evidence and see that, while Saturday is always a Sabbath, the Sabbath does not always happen to be Saturday. There are various other days which are established as Sabbaths in Old Testament references. We quote as an instance the 23d chapter of Leviticus. In the 24th verse the Lord commands the children of Israel to observe the first day of the seventh month always as a Sabbath. It is apparent at once that this time will not fall on Saturday in two consecutive years. In the year 1933 the first day of that week was Saturday. In 1932, it came on Friday. In 1934 it is Sunday. But in each case it is a Sabbath. In the course of the cycle of a short solar epoch, every day in the week will have fallen on the FIRST DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH; but, whether it be Tuesday, or

Wednesday, or Thursday matters not, that day is always to be a Sabbath.

In the 39th verse of this same chapter, the 15th day of the seventh month is always to be a Sabbath. If the first and the 15th days of the month are Sabbaths, and they chance to fall on Saturday, the first and the 15th days of the same month the following year cannot possibly be on Saturday. Therefore we conclude that there are other days called Sabbaths besides the seventh day.

Indeed, in the 23d chapter of Leviticus, verses 37 to 44, we have a record of a week that is to be A WEEK OF SABBATHS. Every day in these seven will be a Sabbath day. Again in Leviticus 25 and in II Chronicles 36, God's law ordains that there shall be a SABBATH YEAR. How quaint it seems to us who have been taught that we must rightly divide the Word of God to find a serious but Scripturally-ignorant people CLAMORING LOUDLY IN THIS TWENTIETH CENTURY FOR OBSERVATION OF ONE SABBATH AND NEGLECTING TEN OTHERS! The first day of the seventh month, the 15th day of the seventh month, the week of Sabbaths, and the Sabbatical year have no advocates or adherents among these wierd, fanatical folk called the Seventh Day Adventists, even though these all are as clearly taught in the Law of God as is the Seventh-day Sabbath!

This Law for Israel Only!

We think it is fairly clear, upon an unprejudiced examination of the Scripture, that it is not the Law of God or the teaching of His Word that Christians should now observe the Sabbath Day. The first mention of the Seventh day as a Sabbath is in connection with the work of God in creation. In Genesis 2, the first three verses are given to the statement that having finished His week of work, the Heavenly Father rested on the Sabbath Day. This day

He blessed and hallowed as symbolical of His finished work. We cannot definitely establish the date of the creation of Adam, but we are inclined to the date of 5411 B.C. From the day of the creation of Adam to the Exodus from Egypt, no single word is ever mentioned concerning the Sabbath Day! If the above-given date for Adam is reasonably correct, then there were at least 3700 years of human history in which the Sabbath is never mentioned.

Abraham believed God, and we presume that the faith that was so intelligently manifested was witnessed by the righteousness of his conduct, yet it is nowhere stated in all the Word that Abraham observed the Sabbath Day. Melchizedek, who collected tithes from Abraham and thus was holier than he, has no single memorial of this Sabbath Day. Not a patriarch from Adam down to Noah mentions the Sabbath. It is utterly inconceivable that these 4,000 years of human history could have been enacted under the direct covenant of God without a mention of the Sabbath Day, had God intended it to prevail.

In the week preceding the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai we meet the first commandment to man to observe this day as one of religious significance. In Exodus 16:23, Moses said: "Here is the Word that God now speaks." The common translation in the King James Version says: "This is the Word that God hath spoken," but the past tense of the word "to speak" in the Hebrew is "darbar," and that word is not here used in this text. The present tense of the word, "amar" is here used, and it should be translated: "This is the Word that God NOW SPEAKS." IN OTHER WORDS, A NEW ORDER IS BEING ESTABLISHED.

In the gathering of the manna within the shadow of Sinai, the children of Israel are commanded to gather enough for the Sabbath Day, for God now institutes a new order. That new order of God is given in the record writ-

ten with His finger on the tables of stone. These are what men now call the commandments of God. This Law was probably given three days after the issuance of the admonition concerning the gathering of manna for the rest-day period.

We find also in Exodus 20:8-11 that this Sabbath Day was a covenant sign BETWEEN GOD AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ONLY. In order that you may clearly see this for yourselves, we quote these verses, separating all classes who are to keep this day. "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work,

THOU, (That is, Israel)
NOR THY SON,
NOR THY DAUGHTER,
THY MANSERVANT,
NOR THY MAIDSERVANT,
NOR THY CATTLE,
NOR THY STRANGER THAT IS WITHIN THY
GATES:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

The verse that we would emphasize is the tenth verse, "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord **THY** God: in it thou shalt not do any work." If we would know to whom God is speaking this word of commandment, we must go back to the two verses of the 20th chapter where God addresses Himself TO THOSE THAT HE BROUGHT OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, OUT OF THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE. This law, then, was

given to the children of Israel as a specific covenant sign between them and God Who was their Redeemer. **THE GENTILES OF THAT DISPENSATION WERE NOT UNDER THIS LAW!**

The Christian Exempt from Jewish Law

In the same manner, the Christians under the dispensation of Christ are not and never have been under the Law of the Sabbath Day. It can be stated on the authority of Scripture that only the Israelites and the men who officially sojourned in the land of Israel were ever expected to obey this Sabbath Law. In Exodus 31:12-18, we have these words: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also **UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL**, saying, Verily my Sabbaths **ye** shall keep: for it is a sign **BETWEEN ME AND YOU** throughout your generations: that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: **FOR WHOSOEVER DOETH ANY WORK THEREIN**, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. **WHEREFORE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL KEEP THE SABBATH**, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign **BETWEEN ME AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL** for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."

The emphasis must be upon verses 16 and 17. In the

first of these verses God says: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath." We would ask the reader of this paper if he is a child of Israel. Are you one of the twelve tribes of the chosen people of God, commonly called Jews? If you are, and know nothing of the cross of Jesus Christ, we have no comment concerning your keeping of the Sabbath Day. For in the 17th verse of this paragraph God Himself says; "It (that is the Sabbath Day) is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever." The writer is a Christian of Scotch, Irish, and English descent. Not having any Jewish blood in his ancestry, he cannot claim this covenant promise.

But those who do claim to be under the Law of Moses and condemn us for not keeping the Sabbath day are themselves guilty of this same condemnation! According to these verses that we have just read there are two duties embodied in the Sabbath Day. The first is to observe it religiously and literally. On that day no work may be done of any kind whatever. No fires can be lighted, no journeys undertaken, but the day must be spent in absolute suspension of activity as nearly as is humanly possible. By the express command of God a violator of the Sabbath was officially executed by the people for gathering sticks to make a fire on this sacred day. The Seventh Day Adventist who prattles so loudly of the sacred need to observe this day is himself guilty of a thousand infractions every Sabbath. They drive their automobiles, they cook their food, they journey from one place to another. If they have a puncture they change their tires, and even in the case of their ministry, perform manual labors that are expressly forbidden. In all this they violate this law that they verbally uphold.

The second obligation under the law was the obligation to defend the day by executing him who offended against that day. In the words above quoted God has said

"Whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath Day, he shall surely be put to death." Yet in the congregations of Seventh Day worshippers there is not one in a hundred who does not violate this Sabbath injunction against labor. Are they executed? They are not. They have places of honor and prominence in the service of these Judaistic churches.

The Gentiles Never Under This Law

But even if we could and did keep the Sabbath, it would be useless on our part. The observance of the Sabbath Day, according to the clear statement of this text, IS NO MORE BINDING UPON THE CHILD OF GOD UNDER CHRIST THAN IS THE JEWISH RITE OF CIRCUMCISION! In the 34th chapter of Exodus, verse 27, which we here quote, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the binding agreement of these words I have made a covenant WITH THEE AND WITH ISRAEL," this teaching is reiterated. These words addressed to Moses are spoken (as the next verse shows) concerning the tables of stone that held the ten commandments. So we will state again that wherever this law is spoken of it is a direct revelation to the children of Israel. We repeat also, that the Gentiles were never under this law, except such as were proselytes of Judaism.

Since the Gentiles were not under the Law of the Sabbath in Old Testament days, by what wierd misconception of illogic can we contend that they are under the law now that the law is done away? The purpose of the giving of the law was to establish the twelve tribes of Israel as the covenant people of God and to keep them close to Him. So in Exodus the law is given, teaching the Sabbath Day to commemorate the finished work of God. In the Book of Deuteronomy, however, when the law is reiterated, the Sabbath Day is again specifically given to the Jew and

only to such strangers as are dwelling in his land and under his law.

On this occasion, however, the basis of the Sabbath is changed. In Exodus God said that they should commemorate the Sabbath Day in memory of the finished work of creation. In Deuteronomy He says they shall commemorate the Sabbath Day in memory of a completed redemption. He has brought them out of the land of bondage, He has redeemed them from the yoke of Egypt. Now, being implanted in Palestine, their promised land, they are to observe the Sabbath from that moment on AS A TOKEN OF REDEMPTION. To the Christians of the 20th century we would address certain specific queries. Were you ever in slavery in Egypt? Did God redeem you from that land? Did the God of Israel lead you through 40 years of wilderness wandering? Did He finally bring you in peace to the borders of Palestine? If your answer to these questions is "no," then you are not under the law of the Sabbath Day! God re-stated it as a symbol of this redemption from the land of slavery. Of course, if you are a Gentile dwelling in Jerusalem, a sojourner under the law of Israel, then the law applies to you. But if you are not a Jew or living under a Jewish council that is recognized by God, the Old Testament specifically states you are not under the Sabbath commandment.

THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus and the Sabbath

The teaching of the New Testament is equally definite concerning the Sabbath Day. It must be noted at the very outset that Jesus Christ did observe Saturday, the seventh day, as the Sabbath. In Luke 4:16 and 31 it is very evident that He worshipped, and taught on that day. He also conducted His services in the synagogue on that

day as was customary. But let it be remembered that Jesus in the days of His flesh was a Jew. He was of the family of David, of the tribe of Judah. After the flesh He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Humanly speaking, He was under that law because of His ancestry. In spite of this, He was criticised for His attitude toward the Sabbath, not once, but again and again. In the 12th chapter of Matthew, in the 3d chapter of Mark, in the 5th chapter of John, the carping critics of His conduct rail against Him for His lack of veneration for the day. In Matthew 12:8 we hear Him replying that He is superior to that day!

The Lord Jesus, incarnate in the flesh of man, was the same God who gave the law on Sinai. Thus He could show His power over that day, claiming to be Lord even of that Sabbath day. So the teaching He has left concerning it must be authoritative. His testimony is clearly seen in Mark 2:27, where He says THAT ALL MEN ARE SUPERIOR TO THIS DAY! "The Sabbath was made for man" is His contention, "and not man for the Sabbath." This text must be analyzed with due recognition of the fact that Jesus Christ had great reverence for the Law of God, even as we have today. In Matthew 5:17 He likened the Law to a contract between God and Israel. Not one word of this contract was to be violated, and not one clause to be done away, UNTIL ALL HAD BEEN FULFILLED.

This figure of speech is very common in our business practice today. When two men enter into a contract, the conditions of that agreement are binding upon both parties only until that contract is fulfilled. When Mr. Jones enters into a contract with Mr. Smith to build a house on certain stipulated specifications, and the first party agrees to pay the price of ten thousand dollars, either party to this contract may be held by law to the itemized conditions. But when the house has been built and the price agreed upon

has been paid, there is no law, natural or moral, whereby either party can compel the other to perform again the fulfilled function of that contract. Jesus said the law was a contract between God and the Jew. Indeed, we have already seen that God Himself has made this same statement in the phrase, "after the tenor of this agreement I have made a contract with thee and with Israel."

CHRIST FULFILLED THAT CONTRACT!

There is no more power of obligation in that dead law than there is in a contract fulfilled a hundred years ago! Again and again the life, and the work, and the teaching of Jesus Christ specifically point to the fact that the believer, saved by Christ, is not under this law!

The Apostles and the Sabbath

This same teaching is contained in all of the church epistles. We marvel that any intelligent, reasoning creature could read through the Book of Galatians and still contend that the Christian should keep the Sabbath Day. The historical background of Galatians is well understood by the Church today. Certain Judaizing legalists had come down from Jerusalem and had unsettled this New Testament company by saying that they not only must believe in Jesus Christ, but must also keep the law of Moses. The council of Apostles summoned at Jerusalem to settle this issue clearly stated that the Gentile believers were not to be under the law or to observe the Sabbath Day. In the third chapter of this Galatian epistle Paul also gives eight specific reasons for saying that the Christian is not under the law. Again and again he makes this very plain in such words as these: "For as many as are under the works of the law are under the curse." "No man is justified by the works of the law."* "Christ hath redeemed us from the

curse of the law." "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, **BUT NOW THAT CHRIST IS COME WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER THIS SCHOOLMASTER.**" "Ye are not under the law; ye are under grace." We do not think it is possible that any reasoning Christian could think his way through the book of Galatians and come to any other conclusion than that which is reached by Paul in the 4th verse of the 5th chapter: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, **WHOSOEVER OF YOU ARE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW;** ye are fallen from grace."

Which Law Was Done Away?

We have heard very often the spurious argument of the Seventh Day Adventist that there were two laws. One of these was the law of Moses, commonly called the ceremonial law, and the other was the law of God, commonly called the moral law. This is a very dangerous attitude for the Seventh Day Adventist to assume, and is a typically dishonest method of reading God's Word. The subtle error in this contention is that the laws given by Moses **WERE NOT OF GOD.** Thus the sections of the Pentateuch containing those laws are not to be received as authoritative. The fact of the matter is, it is all God's law, from the first word to the last. Moses wrote only those commandments that were given to him by Jehovah. This moral law is described as that which was written on the tables of stone by the finger of God. The 20th chapter of Exodus that tells of the giving of this law only begins the long conversation between Moses and God. The chapter opens with these words: "And God spake all these words." These words continue through the 11 consecutive succeeding chapters. The people saw the thunder and lightning, the noise of the trumpets, the smoking mountain, and then heard God's voice speaking. In the 19th verse of the 20th chapter

of Exodus we hear them say to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." In the 22nd verse, Moses drawing near to God to receive His message for the people hears God saying, "Thus thou shalt say **UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL,** Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven." Then he began to utter those words spoken to His Holy lips which constitute what the quibbling legalists call Ceremonial Law. It matters not whether the words were spoken by the lips of God or written by His finger. They are His words, equally binding upon those to whom they were uttered.

Our Seventh Day advocates also contend that the moral law is still in force but that the ceremonial law is done away. This is most eminently not so, but if it were true that one law has been done away, that law which is done away is described in the third chapter of second Corinthians. Beginning in the third verse and concluding with the 16th is the statement that that law **WHICH WAS WRITTEN ON TABLES OF STONE IS TO BE DONE AWAY,** and the more glorious dispensation of Grace is to take its place. **THE ONLY LAW THAT WAS EVER WRITTEN ON TABLES OF STONE IS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.** If the law that was done away is that which was written on tables of stone, as Paul contends, then the Seventh Day advocate has lost his last ground of reason.

It is argued at once that this opens the gate to licentious living and immorality of conduct, but we shall later show that such is not the case. Paul again makes himself very clear in the second chapter of Colossians, where he is specifying which law it was that was taken away. **HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONS THE LAW OF THE SABBATH DAY,** contending that this law has been

nailed to the cross of Christ and taken out of the way. He says: "Let no man judge you in meat;" that is to say, we now can eat pork, although it was forbidden to the Jew. There were certain ceremonials connected with drinking, oblations, typical washings, and such pageantry as was binding on the Jew under the law. The Christian is not supposed to observe this. One day in the week also the Jew must fast, but in Jesus Christ these fasts are swept away, so the Apostle says, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drinking, in regard to a feast day, or a fast day; The new moon, OR THE SABBATH DAYS; which things are a shadow of Him that was to come, the substance of which is Christ." Here is a clear-cut statement that cannot possibly be evaded. The Sabbath Day is done away in the cross of Christ. Having Jesus, the Substance, we no longer clutch at shadows, but have come out from under the bondage of that day.

The Christian Code of Ethics

We do not mean to suggest that there is no code of conduct for the believer, when the Ten Commandments have been done away in the Cross. Indeed, the Christian under Grace has a higher standard of living and morality than did the Jew under Law. We may ourselves see that every precept of the moral law is reiterated under Grace, with one exception. When the Lord was nailed to the cross, He did not obviate the commandment: "Thou shalt not steal;" for the New Testament states: "Let him that stole steal no more." Under the law, the Jew was commanded: "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but a higher standard of righteousness is demanded under Grace, which says: "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her in his own heart hath already committed adultery." In the New Testament, every commandment of the ten is repeated, reinforced, and given a higher application, save only one.

In the entire New Testament THERE IS NO COMMAND TO REVERENCE ANY ONE OF THE SEVEN DAYS ABOVE ANOTHER!

Indeed, we are dealing here with two separate and specific principles. We are compelled to say that even the most rabid advocates of the Seventh Day law do not observe it in their common practice. When God gave this commandment to Israel He reinforced it with the death penalty for violation. By his own commandment a man who did not desire to eat a cold lunch was sentenced to death for building a fire on that day. Our Seventh Day Adventist friends do not rob themselves of the delights of hot meals on the Sabbath Day, but consistently violate the law that these say they observe. We have seen even ministers of this sect cranking their cars or driving their automobiles and performing various other types of labor, violating the very law for whose observance they so vociferously cry. What type of hypocrisy is this? The insincerity of the life of these advocates is sufficient commentary on the actuality of their belief. God established the Seventh Day as a covenant between Him and Israel, TO COMMEMORATE HIS FINISHED WORK IN CREATION. For almost two thousand years, which is the span of time that the Law reigned over man, this Sabbath Day was binding upon Israel.

Who Changed the Day?

The question has often been raised, "Who had the authority to change this day?" We simply reply, "Jesus Christ." It was not a pope, a college of cardinals, or a council of the church that established our custom of worshipping on the first day, but it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He made this change in the time of worship by rising from the dead ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK. Thus our text literally applies, "It was the end

of the Sabbath Day." Not longer are men to observe the finished work of creation. They now have a new fact to commemorate! When you date your letters "1934," do you mean that it has been one thousand, nine hundred and thirty-four years since the earth was created? You do not. You mean that 1,934 years ago an event transpired that transcended creation so gloriously that the fact of creation became relatively unimportant. What was that event that gave to history a literal new birthday? It was the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead. There are two principles: the seventh day, used to commemorate the finished work of God, or the first day for worship and service, **TO COMMEMORATE THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD.**

It is by Divine revelation that the Church of Jesus Christ follows this second and later custom. It can be shown beyond any question, in history as well as in Scripture, that the New Testament Church customarily met on this day. In the 20th chapter of Acts and the 7th verse I have these words: "**AND UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, WHEN THE DISCIPLES CAME TOGETHER TO BREAK BREAD,** Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." This was done in fulfillment of the command of Jesus to His church, "This do in remembrance of me, as oft as ye are met together." In I Cor. 16:2, "**UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." In the older manuscripts of the New Testament, the phrase is "**UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK WHEN YE ARE MET TOGETHER.**" These references of the New Testament coincide with the statements of history that from the time of the founding of the first church of the Apostles, the custom has been to worship on the first day of the week. Indeed, in the 20th chap-

ters of John, the 19th verse, the first appearance of Jesus to a body of believers was in the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were assembled together.

Because of the great interest and comment that is being raised today by legalizing proselytes who teach false doctrines that subvert the Grace of Christ, we will lay down as a basic rule this Scriptural guide for conduct: If you are a Jew, still living under the law of Moses and repudiating Christ as Savior, keep the Sabbath Day. If you are a child of God, saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and you honor Him as a Savior through Christ, then worship God on the first day of the week. This do as a living, eternal testimony to the power of Him who rose from the dead.

The Seventh Day—to commemorate the finished work of creation.

The First Day—to celebrate the Resurrection.

The Seventh Day—for the Jew.

The First Day—for the Christian.

Which are you, Jew or Christian? On this basis, and on the Word of God, choose your Day.