

Thoughts on the Sabbath

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THOSE who observe the Sabbath of the Bible, are able to present as its foundation, a *divine* institution. "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Gen.ii,3. To sanctify is "to separate, set apart, or appoint to a holy, sacred, or religious use." *Webster*.

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It was by this act of the great Creator, that the Sabbath was made for man. Ex.xx, 11; Mark ii,27. As God has never taken this blessing from the seventh day, and has never given to secular purposes the day which he here "set apart to a holy use," the original institution still exists. As he has never sanctified another day as a weekly Sabbath, the Sabbath of the Lord is the *only* Sabbatic institution. Ex.xx, 10.

As God made the Sabbath in paradise, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, it follows that it is not Jewish, not a carnal ordinance, not a yoke of bondage, but a sacred institution made for the well-being of the human family, while yet upright. The great Creator rested first on the seventh day and was refreshed. Ex.xxxi,17. The Son of God who kept his Father's commandments, followed this example, [John xv,10; Ex.xx,8-11,] and thus, also, did the entire church so far as inspiration gives us the facts.

After giving the institution of the Sabbath, the book of Genesis, in its brief record of 2370 years, does not again mention it. This has been urged as ample proof that those holy men, who during this period were perfect and walked with God in the observance of his commandments, statutes and laws, [Gen.v,24; vi,9; xxvi,5,] all lived in open profanation of that day which God had blessed and set apart to a holy use. But the book of Genesis also omits any distinct reference to the doctrine of future punishment, the resurrection of the body, the revelation of the Lord in flaming fire, and the judgment

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of the great day. Does this silence prove that the patriarchs did not believe these great doctrines? Does it make them any the less sacred?

But the Sabbath is not mentioned from Moses to David, a period of five hundred years during which it was enforced by the penalty of death. Does this prove that it was not observed during this period? The jubilee occupied a very prominent place in the typical system, yet in the whole Bible a single instance of its observance is not recorded. What is still more remarkable, there is not on record a single instance of the observance of the great day of atonement, notwithstanding the work in the holiest on that day was the most important service connected with the worldly Sanctuary. And yet the observance of the other and less important festivals of the seventh month, which are so intimately connected with the day of atonement, the one preceding it by ten days, the other following it in five, is repeatedly and particularly recorded. Ezra iii,1-6; Neh.viii, 2,9-12,14-18; 1Kings viii,2,65; 2Chron.v,3; vii,8,9; John vii,2-14,37. It would be

sophistry to say that this silence respecting the day of atonement, when there were so many instances for it to be mentioned, proves that that day was never observed; and yet it is actually a better argument than the similar one urged against the Sabbath from the book of Genesis.

The reckoning of time by weeks was established in Gen.i;ii. This period of time is marked only by the recurrence of the sanctified Rest-day of the Creator. That the patriarchs reckoned time by weeks and

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by sevens of days, is evident from several texts. Gen.xxix,27,28; viii,10,12; vii, 4,10; L,10; Job ii,13. That the reckoning of the week was rightly kept appears evident from the fact that in Ex.xvi, Moses on the *sixth* day declares that "tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." Verses 22,23.

But if the opponents of the Sabbath, claim that a knowledge of the true seventh day was lost in the patriarchal age, we will now show that before God gave the ten commandments he pointed out the true seventh day in a manner which could not be mistaken. First. By a direct miracle. God caused the fall of a certain quantity of manna each day of the week to the sixth day when there was a double quantity. Ex.xvi,4,5,29. Second. On the seventh day, which Moses calls the Sabbath, there was none. Verses 25-27. Third. That which was gathered on the sixth day kept good over the seventh, whereas it would corrupt in the same length of time on other days. Compare verses 23,24, with verses 19,20. This three-fold weekly miracle continued the space of forty years. Verse 35; Joshua v, 12. The fact is settled, then, beyond all controversy that the Sabbath of the Lord which was made in Paradise, was here directly pointed out by God himself. And to this important testimony we add the declaration of Nehemiah ix,13,14, that God made known to Israel his holy Sabbath.

No one pretends that the true seventh day was lost by the Jewish church after this. And it is certain that as late as our Lord's crucifixion they observed

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the true seventh day. They rested upon the day enjoined in the fourth commandment; namely, the day which the Lord rested upon and hallowed at creation. Luke xxiii,55,56; Ex.xx,8-11; Gen.ii,3.

Since the record of inspiration closed, the Jews and the Christians, each scattered in every land under heaven, have carefully kept the reckoning of the week. If a mistake in this reckoning had been made, a discrepancy would at once manifest this. For it is certain that every Jew and every Christian under heaven could not at the same time make the same mistake. The fact that there is no such discrepancy is decisive testimony that such mistake has not been made. Consequently we have the true seventh day from creation.

When God gave his law in person, in the hearing of the people, by the fourth precept of that law he solemnly enforced the observance of the holy Sabbath. Ex.xx,8-11. In explicit language the great Law-giver states the reason why he made the Sabbath and the time when this act was performed. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore [i.e., for this reason] the Lord blessed the Sabbath day

and hallowed it." This is the reason why God made the Sabbath. It is the same reason that is stated in Gen.ii,3.

The act by which God made the Sabbath is here stated with distinctness. It was his act of blessing and hallowing his Rest-day. The time when this act was performed is here given as in Gen.ii,2,3; namely,

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the close of the creation week. And it is worthy of note that in thus giving the fourth commandment, God calls the seventh day the Sabbath at the time when he thus placed his blessing upon it. This most effectually shuts the mouths of those who deny the institution of the Sabbath at creation.

The great design of the Sabbath was that there might be a standing memorial of God's act of creation. Its observance would have saved the world from atheism and idolatry; for it has ever pointed back to God, the great first cause; and it has ever pointed out the true God, the great Creator, in distinction from "the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth."

We have now considered three important facts in the history of the Sabbath. First, its institution at creation; second, the fact that the true seventh day was pointed out to Israel; and third, the grand law of the Sabbath, the fourth commandment. As we proceed in this investigation we notice three different Sabbaths. First, the *weekly* Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day. Ex.xx,10. Second, the *annual* Sabbaths of the Jews, the first, tenth, fifteenth and twenty-third days of the seventh month. Lev.xxiii,24,27-32,39. And third, the septennial Sabbath of the land, the seventh year. Lev.xxv,1-7.

The Sabbath of the Lord was instituted at creation, and at Sinai was embodied in the royal law, every precept of which according to James ii,8-12, is still binding upon us. But the Sabbaths of the Jews and the Sabbath of the land were instituted in the wilderness, and embodied in the hand-writing of ordinances with the feasts, new-moons and ceremonies of the

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Jewish church. That hand-writing of ordinances, which was a shadow of good things to come, was nailed to the cross by our Lord, thus taking all these festivals out of the way.

The most precious blessings are promised to those who observe the Sabbath of the Lord. Isa.lvi; lviii,13,14. And it is worthy of notice that this prophecy pertains to a period of time when the salvation of the Lord is near to be revealed. Heb.ix, 28; Isa.xlv,17. The blessing is promised to the sons of the stranger, the Gentiles, [Ex.xii,48,49; Isa.xiv,1; Eph.ii,12,] as well as to the people of Israel. If they will keep the Sabbath holy unto the Lord while dispersed in the four quarters of the earth, God will bring them again to his holy mountain. The promises here made by the prophet shall be verified when the outcasts of Israel and the sons of the stranger shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. Matt.viii,11.

Notice the distinction between the Sabbath of the Lord and the Sabbaths of the Jews as presented in the prophets. Of the perpetuity of the former let us judge after reading Isa.lxvi,22,23, where we are informed of its observance in the New Earth. But the Lord assures us by the prophet that the latter shall cease.

Hos.ii,11. The fulfillment of this prophecy may be read in Col.ii,14-17. The weekly Sabbath is styled "the Sabbath of the Lord," "my Sabbath," etc. Ex.xx,10; Isa.lvi,4; Eze.xx,12-24; xxii,8,26. The annual and septennial Sabbaths are styled "her Sabbaths" and "your Sabbaths."

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Hos.ii,11; Lev.xxiii,32; xxvi,34,35,43; 2Chron.xxxvi,21; Lam.i,7.

Though the Scriptures nowhere teach or authorize the change of the Sabbath, yet they plainly point out the power that should do this. Let the reader compare Dan.vii,25, with the history of the Papal power, and carefully mark its acts of changing and mutilating the divine constitution, the ten commandments.

We have seen the grand law of the Sabbath embodied in the decalogue. We come now to the New Testament. That our Lord did not destroy that law, or lessen our obligation to obey it, he clearly teaches in Matt.v,17-19. And we may with the utmost safety affirm "that the apostles did not disturb what their Lord left untouched." Rom.iii,31; James ii,8-12. We say therefore that the New Testament teaches the perpetuity of God's law, and *for that reason does not re-enact it*.

Our Lord came to "magnify the law and make it honorable." Isa.xlii,21. He kept his Father's commandments, and solemnly enjoined obedience to them, pointedly rebuking those who made them void that they might keep the traditions of the elders. John xv,10; Matt.xix,16-19; xv,3-9. "The Sabbath was made for man," says the Saviour, "and not man for the Sabbath." Mark ii,27. If the Sabbath was made for man, then it belongs alike to Jews and Christians, and to all our race. The statement carries the mind back to the creation of our race and evinces that the Sabbath was made in immediate connection with that event. On the one hand our Lord

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rebukes the Pharisaic observance of the Sabbath; on the other, he rebukes with equal force that class of modern teachers who affirm that the Sabbath of the Lord which Infinite Wisdom made *for* man before the fall, was one of those Sabbaths which were *against* him, *contrary* to him and taken out of the way at the death of Christ. Col.ii.

The fact that those, who had been with Jesus during his ministry, "rested the Sabbath-day according to the commandment," after his crucifixion, and resumed labor on the first day of the week [Luke xxiii,55,56; xxiv,1] shows clearly that they knew nothing of the supposed change of the Sabbath. Yet Jesus testifies that all things which he had heard of his Father he had made known unto them. John xv,15. The fact that God has never *sanctified* the first day of the week shows plainly that it is not sacred time, and not a divinely instituted Sabbath. The fact that God has never required us to rest on that day shows that its observance in the place of the Sabbath of the Lord, is a clear instance of making void the commandments of God to keep the traditions of men. Mark vii,6-13; Prov.xxx,6.

That sanctified time exists in the gospel dispensation, or in other words, that there is a day which belongs to God, is clear from Rev.i,10. That "the Lord's day," is the Sabbath-day is plain from Isa.lviii,13. As the Sabbath was made for man, we find it under all dispensations, and in every part of the Bible. Those therefore

who profane the Sabbath, sin against God and wound their own souls.
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