

**The Word of Truth Ministry Presents  
Special Full Length Studies  
#SS22**

**THE SABBATH AND THE SUNDAY  
QUESTION**

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The two subjects dealt with in this pamphlet are ones concerning which fixed ideas, personal religious prejudices, and traditional views are almost bound to assert themselves to the exclusion of everything that is revealed in the Word of God. On these subjects many are so fully convinced that what they believe is the truth that they actually read their beliefs into the Word of God and imagine confirmation of them on everyone of its pages. There was a time when this might have been true of this writer, but as he now carefully searches his heart and mind before the Lord, he is confident that his own ideas, prejudices and traditions have long ago been discarded, and that which he now sets forth is the accurate truth of God.

The writing of this pamphlet grew out of a very definite need. Hundreds of letters have been received seeking help upon these two questions. I have no help to offer except that which is revealed in the Word of God. I shall not attempt to wrest the stubborn facts of divine revelation to make them teach something. There will be no straining of Scripture to prove any point. I do not set out to prove anything - either that the seventh day should be observed or that the first day should be kept. This will disappoint both sabbath keepers and Sunday observers. But I feel it will satisfy those who desire to be led into the truth of God's Word.

*The Sabbath Question*

The earliest passage that has any bearing upon this subject is **Genesis 2 :1-3 :**

**Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it : because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.**

We must always allow Scripture to mean all that it can mean, yet we must always be

on our guard against reading into it ideas that are not there, but which we may desire to be there. There are many people who read into the passage just quoted the idea that the sabbath was committed to man in Eden as a day to be observed. This, they insist, makes it binding upon all men at all time. A careful and unbiased examination of this passage will show that this is neither taught nor implied in it.

In this passage we are told that God ended His work and rested from all His work on the seventh day. The word *rest* used here does not accurately express the truth of the Hebrew. Our word *rest* speaks of that which we do when we are tired, but it is unreasonable to think that God's work so fatigued Him that He found Himself in need of rest. God ceased or stopped, but He did not rest. On the seventh day He ended His work and ceased from His work.

The fact that God ceased from all His work on the seventh day has led some to insist that we should follow His example and do the same. Such reasoning is utterly false, unless it can be shown that it is our duty to do everything that God did and follow Him in every example. To impose upon ourselves the doing of a thing just because God or Christ did it is self-imposed law which is never acceptable to God. It is the private's duty to obey orders, not do what the general does. The first chapter of Genesis contains thirty-one things that God did. Why then is our imitation of Him to begin with the thirty-second thing that He did?

### **God Blessed It**

In this passage we are also told that God blessed the seventh day. The word *blessed* has become a ritualistic word which seems to convey very little meaning. Men use it without it making any sense, and they hear it without it conveying any sense to them. They pray for God to "bless" them, and seem to mean that God shall give them spiritual, material or physical benefits. But the word cannot indicate this when we "bless" God, or when God blesses a day.

The Greek word for "bless" is *eulogeo*, from which comes our word *eulogy*. This is the word used in the *Septuagint Version* of this passage, and this provides the best clue to its meaning. The word *eulogeo* means "to speak well of, to praise, or to distinguish with favor." We can invoke God to do this for others, or we can do it ourselves toward God.

When I speak well of a thing, or praise a thing, I bless it. For example, some things that are worthless to others may be of great value to me, and I may be willing to pay a high price for them. When I say "that is worth a thousand dollars to me," I have spoken well of, praised or blessed that thing.

If I should find a stone which appears to be an uncut gem. I could, as a result of wishful thinking, pronounce it to be a flawless diamond of great value. That would be my blessing upon it, since I have spoken well of it. However, that blessing would be

worthless since I know nothing about gems or their value. But, if the stone were taken to a qualified and recognized expert on gems, and he should pronounce it to be a diamond of great value, that would be quite different. An expert has now spoken well of, praised or blessed that stone.

In application of this illustration, we see how God had labored for six days but had attached no special significance to any of them, not even the day upon which He created man. To us, this might seem to be the most significant day of all, but with God it was the same as the five that had preceded it. But when it came to the seventh day God ceased from all his labors and blessed, or, spoke well of, the seventh day. This gave a value to that day which no other day possessed. It became exceedingly precious to God. No matter how others may regard it, the seventh day, above all other days, was-valuable to Him.

However, under no circumstances does this imply that God gave this precious possession to the man He created, or that man has a right to rush in and claim this day. No *more* so than I would give my precious gem to you the moment I discovered its great value, or that "you have the right to rush in and take my diamond as soon as you heard that an expert had spoken well of it. It is evident that if one has something which is precious to him, which has great value in his sight, he will exercise exceeding care in regard to whom he gives it. Furthermore, the bestowal of it will indicate some high regard or love that the donor has for the one to whom it is given.

Even so it was after God had attached great value to the seventh day. It remained His precious property. And while men might desire it, they cannot have it unless God bestows it upon them. They cannot take it apart from this.

There are those who argue that since God blessed the seventh day, then all men should make some attempt to observe it. But this does not follow. Before God blessed the seventh day, He had blessed Adam and Eve. Later He blessed Noah and his sons, then Abraham. However, this does not mean that we are to maintain some special observance toward these men. God spoke well of them, therefore, I must think of them as God regarded them, but beyond this I do not go.

### **God Sanctified It**

We also learn from this passage that God sanctified the seventh day. The word *sanctified* has also become a religious word. It is taken in many circles to mean "to make sinless," but that is not its meaning. Literally it means "to set apart." When this is done by God it always means set apart by God *for* His own use. This is best expressed in the word *hallowed*.

Therefore, from this first reference we have learned of the seventh day that God

ceased all His work, that He set a great value upon it, and that He set it apart for His own use. Just what use He will make of it or to whom He will give it remains to be discovered. This is no place to read into the Word our own ideas. Now is the time to discover the truth from the revelation of God's Word.

## **The Sabbath Given to Israel**

If the generally accepted chronology is correct, and we have good reason for believing that it is, there are 2500 years of human history between Adam and Moses. In that period of time the precious seventh day was entirely the possession of God. He had blessed it after the creation of man, thus giving it infinite value. He had set it apart for His own use, but there is no record of any use being made of it by Him. It had not been given to any man or body of men. In all that time its preciousness had not changed. It could not change, inasmuch as He had blessed it. But after 2500 years we discover it being given to a certain body of people.

Four hundred years before it was given to these people, God had called a man named Abram. We read of this in Genesis 12. This man Abram was directed by God to get out of the land and the place of his birth, away from all his relatives, even his nearest of kin, and go to a land that God would show him. In God's agreement(covenant) with him He promised to make of him a great nation, to make his name great, to bless him and to make him a blessing. Gen, 12 :1-3.

From this point on the Old Testament and the four Gospels have primarily in view the descendants (seed) of this man Abram. It is a record of God's dealings with them. We are led step by step through God's change of this man's name to Abraham, the birth, of his son Isaac to whom the agreement (covenant) was confirmed; the birth of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, who became the father of twelve sons and these sons became the heads of twelve families, and these families (with some little variation) became twelve tribes, and these twelve tribes became the nation of Israel.

These were the people to whom God promised to make a great nation, to bless them, to make them a blessing, to give them a land, to be their God, to take them to be His people, to use them as a channel of blessing so that all nations of the earth should be blessed through them. And because God could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself, thus confirming this agreement. See Gen. 23 :16-18, Hebrews 6 :13-17.

It is only by full recognition of the unique character before God of the people of Israel that the Bible can ever be understood. The truth that related to them is foundational and apart from it no abiding structure of truth can be erected.

The increase of Israel from seventy souls to a great nation occurred while they were in bondage in the land of Egypt. From this bondage they were brought out miraculously by God. He brought them out by His own mighty power, opened a dry

path for them through the Red Sea, gave them water from a rock when they thirsted, and fed them with manna when they hungered. It was upon the occasion of giving them the manna that God saw fit to teach them the blessed and sanctified character that the seventh day held before Him. He would teach them the preciousness of it in His sight before He gave it to them. Even as a precious stone that a man would give to another, the giver would impress its great value upon the recipient lest it should be carelessly handled and become lost.

When the promise of the manna was given to Israel they were ordered to go out every day and gather sufficient for that day, but on the sixth day they were to bring in and prepare just twice as much. Exodus 16 :4-5. Some in their greed and fear tried to preserve some of it from the first day to the second, but it became stinking and wormy. Exodus 16 :20.

They were not told why they were to gather twice as much on the sixth day, but after they had done this, the rulers of the congregation came and reported it to Moses. Then it was explained to them by him. He said, "**Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord.**"

When they kept the manna from the sixth to the seventh day, it did not spoil.

**And Moses said, Eat that today, for today is a sabbath unto the Lord, today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. Exodus 16:25-26.**

Some in Israel did not readily accept this, and went forth to gather on the seventh day but they found none. This caused Jehovah to utter these words of reproof and instruction to Moses.

**And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that THE LORD HATH GIVEN YOU THE SABBATH, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day. Exodus 16:28-30.**

Thus it was, in this simple manner, that God gave His precious day to the people of Israel. At this time it concerned only the great truth "that this was God's day of cessation, that they were not to go forth and seek manna, and that every man was to abide in his own place. This was about all the truth they could receive and assimilate in one day. Soon they would -be given full rules for its observance. These rules are found in the law that God gave to His people Israel.

## The Law Given to Israel

The self-will that is constantly manifested by so many professing Christians, their determination to make the Bible mean what they feel it should mean, their purpose to extract from it some preconceived view, to make it support some creedal idea which they have already accepted, is nowhere else more manifest than in their treatment of the truth that God has revealed concerning His giving of the law to the people of Israel. They completely ignore the truth revealed in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus, then begin their consideration of the law with chapter twenty. That the law was given to Israel alone, in connection with a definite purpose of God in regard to that nation is clearly set forth in Exodus 19. Many insist that this just cannot be so, therefore, instead of receiving the simple truth of God's revelation, they ignore it, or else try to interpret it to make it mean something else. All such attempts are doomed to failure, for some faithful proclaimer is going to bring God's truth to their attention and point out the fallacy of their interpretation. That the law was given to Israel and to that nation alone is clearly and unequivocally stated in many places in the Word of God.

However, at this point, I anticipate an objection to this position that comes from profound ignorance of certain great truths and does not spring from any knowledge of truth. The objection is often raised that if the law were given to Israel alone, then it leaves all the rest of the world free to commit the gross sins it condemns. If this law is only for Israel, then, they insist, the rest of the world can practice idolatry, commit murder and adultery, lie, steal and covet. I brand this reasoning as being ridiculous and foolish.

We must always keep in mind that the human race has been upon the earth for at least 2500 years before the law was given by God to Moses. During these two and one-half milleniums it has always been wrong to practice idolatry, commit murder or adultery, steal, lie and covet. Furthermore, every man that ever lived between Adam and Moses knew that these things were wrong. Man possessed an inherent and innate knowledge of right and wrong. The idea that a man could do these things because there was no law against them is absurd. And it is just as absurd to think that a man could do these things just because he was not a part of that nation that received the law that legislated against these things.

A careful study of Romans 2 will reveal that every man alike possessed a God-given knowledge of right and wrong, which tells him the difference between right and wrong in regard to every matter concerning which men will be brought into judgment before the great white throne.

**For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when THE GENTILES, WHICH HAVE NOT THE LAW, do by nature the things contained in the law, THESE**

**HAVING NOT 'THE LAW, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another). In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."**  
Romans 2:11-16.

In this passage we are told twice that the Gentiles do not have the law. This settles the matter beyond all argument for those who permit the Word of God to settle such things.

In Exodus 19 when God proposed between Himself and Israel the divine agreement contained in the law, He said.:

**"Thus shall thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. Exodus 19 :3-6.**

To this divine proposal the people of Israel answered:

**"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." Exodus 19:8.**

It has been claimed that these words could have no reference to the law inasmuch as it had not been given, therefore, it was impossible for the people of Israel to promise to fulfill an agreement, the terms of which had not yet been stated.

This reasoning is faulty, since their reception of this proposed agreement depended entirely upon their knowledge of God's past dealings with them. They were to read from God's past dealings what His future dealings would be. This is why God reminded them of what He had done to the Egyptians and how He had brought them to Himself.

It is as if a good friend should come to you and ask, "Will you do me a favor?" Your complete confidence in the integrity and justice of this man might lead you to answer "Yes," without knowing just what he is going to ask of you. He being a fair man, he will make no unfair request of you.

Therefore; God was able to remind Israel how that all His dealings with them had been for their own good. He had received nothing from them, they had received everything from Him. In view of this they could accept any agreement that He proffered them without knowing its terms. Their past experiences would tell them that it would be for their highest good. He being a just God, anxious only to bestow favors, would make no unreasonable or intolerable demand upon them. The agreement was simple: if they will obey His voice indeed, He will do certain wonderful things for them. See Deut. 4 :13.

This agreement was entirely one-sided. By it Israel was to receive great benefits. God was to receive only their devotion., They had only to do what they should do, that which was best for them, that which would bring them true joy in life. But by doing this they were to become a peculiar treasure unto God. This would mean that He would cherish, guard, and care for them as a man would do the same *for* his precious treasures. They would also become a kingdom of priests, that is, a nation through which other nations would approach God and by which God would approach the nations.

Among the requirements of this divine agreement between God and Israel was one concerning the keeping of the seventh day, which, a short time before, had been given unto them.

**Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Exodus 20:8.**

The manner in which they were to remember it and keep it holy is explicitly stated.

**Six days shalt thou labor, 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, 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.**

Exodus 20:9-11.

These words do not set forth the giving of the sabbath to Israel. That had been done about thirty days before. By the simple statement, "**See, *for* that the Lord hath given you the sabbath**" (Ex. 16:29). God gave His precious day to the people of Israel. Up to that time it had been His treasure alone. It was called "the sabbath of the Lord thy God." About one month before the giving of the law at mount Sinai, the sabbath had become the joint possession of God and Israel. The truth set forth in Exodus 20 did not bestow the sabbath upon Israel. It regulated and directed the observance of the sabbath that had been given to them a short time before.

There are those who hold "that the Sabbath commandment was a part of God's law before the law was given at Mt. Sinai." They prove this by the fact. that the sabbath was given to Israel a month before they came to Sinai. From this they reason that "both the Sabbath and the law existed *from* creation."

The sabbath did not begin at the creation. It began seven days after God began the restoration of the heavens and earth that had become chaotic by the great disruption. However, even though the sabbath existed *for* 2500 years before it was given to Israel, it was God's precious possession and no man on earth could say that God had given it to him.

We must never regard the sabbath as being a burdensome law to be kept. It must



always be regarded as God's precious possession which He bestowed upon certain men. This bestowal demonstrated the peculiar place they held in His affection. The bestowal *of* this gift took place before the law was given. The law sought to guard and preserve this precious treasure.

It should be noted particularly in Exodus 20:10 that it is emphatically stated that **"the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God."** The believer, if he marks his Bible, should underscore this in red and let it be settled with him forever. This statement declares which day the sabbath is. To God it is the seventh day, no matter what man may think, say or decree about it. Emperors, popes, church councils and creeds have declared it to be an obligation to observe the first day of the week as the sabbath. All these decrees have meant nothing before God. The sabbath could not be changed. The Word still stands - **the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.**

It is true that other days were made sabbaths to Israel, and there were sabbatic weeks and sabbatic years, but the sabbath of sabbaths was the seventh day to Jehovah.

By these statements I do not mean that the man of God living under God's present administration is to attempt some observance of the seventh day. He has no right to do this. In fact, no more right than he would have to take the honors of Israel's priesthood to himself. "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" Hebrews 5 :4. If this sabbath had been a task or a burden, man would hardly be deserving of blame if he assumed the task or burden. But since the sabbath is God's own precious possession, and the bestowing of it is a great honor upon the recipient, we cannot but point the finger of shame at those who would take this honor upon themselves. The sabbath was given to Israel and to no other nation. This is made exceedingly plain by the testimony of **Exodus 31 :12-18.**

**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 generation; 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.**

It is from this passage that we learn the most important truth concerning the sabbath. Having been given to Israel, it becomes a *sign* between Him and the children of Israel. God always uses His words carefully, and the word he used here was *sign*. He did not use the word *seal*. Some would try to force the idea of a seal into this word in order to build up a foundation for the fanciful interpretations they attach to the "seal of God" and "the mark of the beast" in Revelation. Nevertheless, God said a *sign*, and this is the idea we must preserve, and not read into it some idea of our own.

A *sign* is a symbol or emblem which typifies or represents an idea. It is a thing by which something else is represented. This is what the sabbath became to Israel- the emblem or symbol of a great truth - and that truth was the peculiar relationship that existed between God and that nation.

Just as the wedding ring is a sign or a symbol between the husband and wife, even so the sabbath became a sign between God and Israel. The ring represents the love and relationship that exists between the man and the woman who are truly married. The circle is a symbol of its unending character and the metal a sign of its untarnishing nature. And, just as the wedding ring would have no meaning if the husband distributed them to all women who attended the ceremony, even so would the sabbath be a meaningless sign between God and Israel unless it were the peculiar possession of Israel alone. Furthermore, just as no true wife would regard her wedding ring lightly, Israel was to ever have the highest possible regard for the sabbath. This is seen in the words of Moses to Israel in **Exodus 35 :1-3:**

**And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them.**

**Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.**

While these rigid rules and drastic penalties may seem unusually severe to us, yet they were not so to the people of Israel under the conditions of life that then prevailed. Under the conditions that many of us have to live these rules would be intolerable, if not impossible. Up to this time these people had been nomads, traveling toward a land that had been promised to them. As they were not yet established in the land as a nation, no national habits or customs had yet been formed, no deep-rooted traditions had yet become established. It was, therefore, a simple matter to establish habits, customs and traditions in complete harmony with this law. And since the climate of Palestine was very mild, it caused no suffering or inconvenience if no fire were permitted. In Michigan, where this writer makes his home, the temperature may fall as much as 60 degrees below freezing. Heat in a home is an absolute necessity,

especially so if there is a babe or an invalid in the home. At such times if the fire goes out, one has no other choice but to rekindle it or stand by and watch some loved one freeze to death. But in the temperate climate of Palestine, no such problem ever arose. It becomes cool there at times, and a small fire becomes a real comfort, nevertheless, it is not an absolute necessity.

In the land *of* Israel everything ceased *on* the sabbath *or* seventh day. No *one* could buy if he wanted to - *for* no one would sell to him. If any tried to sell he would find no buyers. Every *form* of activity - commercial, governmental, and religious - came to a complete end on the seventh day.

A foreign merchantman visiting the land of Palestine *on* the seventh day of the week would have witnessed a strange and unusual sight. All forms *of* activity were at a complete standstill. It was not a day *of* religious activity, public meetings, service or worship. These went *on for* six days each week, but they ceased *on* the seventh. No fire was kindled, no wisp *of* smoke arose from any house, no food was prepared, no journey of any length was undertaken, nothing was bought, nothing was sold, no burden was carried, no beast of burden performed any work.

If the stranger sought an explanation of all this, he was told that. this was something that God had given to the people of Israel, and that it distinguished them from every other nation upon the earth. The effectiveness of this symbol could only be seen when a whole nation observed it. If one failed to keep it, it spoiled its witness for the whole.

The inflexible character of the sabbath law is seen in the event recorded in **Numbers 15 :32-36:**

**And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.**

**And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.**

This may seem to be unusually severe, and it has caused many to feel that the law is inflexible and harsh. But this sin was deliberate and willful. There was no excuse *for* it. The sabbath law in Israel was a God-given law to the nation. It was not left to the individual. He could not choose whether he would observe the sabbath or not. If he did not observe it, he suffered the extreme penalty.

In spite of the clarity of all God's statements concerning the giving of the law to Israel, there are many who continue to argue :that it is of universal application. It is argued that since Exodus 20:1 opens with the words "**And God spake all these**

**words**" that this makes the law applicable to every man. It is taught that the use *of* the word *Elohim* here indicates this, and that if the title *Jehovah* had been used this would have limited the law to Israel. I have great respect for some who teach this, but brand the teaching as a mistake. About the same thing is found in Exodus 6 :2, but the truths that follow cannot be *of* universal application. Furthermore, any such deduction is very weak when compared with some of the exceedingly strong statements of the Word of God.

In **Deuteronomy 4 :7-8** there are two great questions which set forth the peculiar relationship of the law to Israel and of Israel to the law. The first question is:

**For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?**

There can be only one answer to this question. There was no other nation as great as Israel. God was not as near to any other nation as He was to them. **They were His people, He was their God.**

The second question concerns the law: **And what nation is there so great, that hath STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?**

The answer to this question is that no other nation had a law that was like that of the nation of Israel. If all nations had these statutes and judgments, then the question of Moses approaches the ridiculous. In fact, these are not questions. They were not asked to get an answer. They are great declarations of truth cast in the form of an interrogation for the sake of emphasis.

Some would try to make a distinction here between "the moral" and "the ceremonial law." They hold that every nation had the ten commandments, but only Israel had the "ceremonial law" which followed.

In relation to this I would point out these facts. In Deuteronomy 4:8 Moses speaks of the *statutes and judgments* that Israel has which makes them greater than any other nation, which he was to repeat before them that day. In Deuteronomy 5:1 he begins his recital of these *statutes and judgments* and in these we find the ten commandments.

The law of Moses was always a unit. There is no divine authority for dividing it into "moral" and "ceremonial" laws. In Romans 7:5 "thou shalt not covet" is called "the law," and in I Corinthians 9:9 "thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn" is called the law. Furthermore, the very highest moral laws are found in that which is commonly called the ceremonial law. See **Leviticus 18, 19, 20.**

Among those *statutes and judgments* which no other nation possessed, and which were the basis of Israel's greatness, we find these words:

**Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.**

**Six days thou shalt labor, 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 nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.**

**And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.**

It is only by a most violent wresting and twisting of the Word of God that it can ever be forced to teach that God gave the sabbath to any other people than the nation of Israel, or that it was ever given to anyone before it was delivered to Israel soon after their emancipation from Egypt.

There are two passages which determine the truth of this beyond all question for those who permit such things to be settled by the Word of God. The *first* is from the confession of the priests and Levites under Nehemiah. This passage definitely fixes the time that the sabbath was given to Israel.

**Thou earnest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:**

**And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandest them precepts, statutes and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant. Neh.9:13-14.**

The other passage is in **Ezekiel 20 :10-12.**

**Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. 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.**

This completes our examination of all the main passages in the Old Testament that have any bearing upon the sabbath question. All passages have been considered, and they have been presented in the order in which they appear in the Word of God. There has been no careful selection of certain passages that could be made to present a certain viewpoint. These verses tell us beyond all peradventure of a doubt that the seventh day is God's sabbath of sabbaths, and that it was given to the people of Israel as a sign between Him and that nation. Nothing but blind prejudice and utter disregard for the plain teachings of the Word could cause anyone to take these great truths and attempt to apply them to the Gentiles of any time, whether believers or not.

Before me, as I write, is a book claiming to set forth certain rules for interpreting the

Scriptures. Most *of* these rules are unscriptural, and they are an ideal guide *for* those who seek some means *of* making the Bible teach what they think it should teach, and they should be a real help to those who go to the Word *of* God *for* the purpose *of* finding support *for* some preconceived idea *or* traditional belief.

This book teaches that, "Promises made to particular persons in Scripture may be applied .to all true believers." It also says that "though Scripture is primarily addressed to particular people, yet its truths and its laws are of universal application and perpetual duration. Hence whatever we read in the Bible, we read that which God addresses to us as individuals."

These two principles have been accepted by most men who claim to be teachers of the Word and they are generally practiced by most professing Christians. And it is the acceptance and practice of these false principles of interpretation that has caused all the confusion, disunity and controversy that exists among those who accept the Bible as a revelation from God. Truly an enemy has done this, for only an enemy of the *truth* could have brought about the general acceptance of such principles which completely set aside God's great principle of interpretation - - "**rightly to divide the word of truth.**" (see II Tim. 2:15).

Those who take the "promises made to particular persons" and attempt to apply them to themselves cannot but reap confusion from such efforts. They lay hold of a promise which offers the earth, then of one which promises heaven. As a result they do not know whether their future home is upon the earth or in the heavens. Furthermore, they are guilty of the spiritual crime of taking the promises for themselves while leaving the warnings and threats of judgment to those to whom they were spoken. They wander through Scripture carelessly examining its great truths, taking as their own anything that seems to be attractive, refusing to accept the unattractive by saying it was not spoken to them. They claim that the laws of Scripture are universal and perpetual in their application, and that what they read there is addressed to them, yet they take only such laws as are in harmony with their ideas and traditions, leaving all the rest as if God had never spoken them.

An example of this is seen in the chapter headings that appear in many English Bibles. Over Isaiah 29 they have written, "God's heavy judgment upon Jerusalem" and "the senselessness and deep 'hypocrisy of the Jews;" while over the very next chapter, Isaiah 30, they have written, "God's mercies toward His church." This proves that their real principle of interpretation was, "If it is bad, leave it for Israel; if it is good take it for yourself."

The appropriation of truths in Scripture that were written concerning Israel is a fruitful source of confusion among professing Christians. Once the believer .has had the seriousness of this error pointed out to. him, continuance in it becomes a willful and deliberate sin. It is always our duty to accept every statement in the Bible as being

a revelation of truth, but at the same time we must also give due heed to the people concerning whom it was written.

The sabbath was given to the nation, of Israel as a sign between them and Jehovah. It is spiritual embezzlement for any individual or group to misappropriate this great gift and take it to be a sign between themselves and Jehovah.

There are those who hold that in this period when Israel is "Lo Ammi" or "not My people" that we have the right to rush in and make off with every precious privilege and gift that God has ever given to them. This is a serious error, for the gifts and the callings of God are without repentance.

It seems to me that this type of reasoning is almost as depraved as that which is quite often seen in another matter in this country. As a rule, a man's automobile will seldom be bothered no matter where he leaves it. But, let that car be involved in a wreck and the owner removed to a hospital, that car, if it is not watched, will be carried off piece by piece until nothing but the frame remains.

During this time when Israel is being punished for her sins, the things that God gave to her cannot be appropriated by others. God is watching over everything he committed to her, even while she is experiencing His rod of punishment. As part of her suffering, her sabbath has ceased:

**I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts; Hosea 2:11.**

The sabbath can only be fully and properly observed by Israel while she is in her own land under her own government. If Israel now tries to keep her sabbath, she will have no recognition from God in it. All opportunity to properly observe the sabbath came to an end when God's ambassador decreed "that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles." Acts 28 :28. However, the same chapter that tells of the cessation of Israel's sabbath, also tells of her complete restoration. Read **Hosea 2 :15-23**, the last verse of which says:

**And I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.**

Those who would appropriate Israel's sabbath usually teach that God is done with Israel once and for all. Not knowing the quality of the mercy of God, they reason that the sins of Israel have cut her off from Jehovah forever. The Scripture provides the perfect answer to this:

**Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances**

**of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts. Is His name.**

**If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.**

**Thus saith the Lord; if heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord. Jeremiah 31:35-37.**

## **The Sabbath in the Gospels**

The Gospel of Matthew is a direct continuation of Old Testament history. The dispensation, the people, the land and the city are identical with those in the book of Malachi. The Messiah promised to Israel in the Old Testament is in full view when we come into the four Gospels. He was an Israelite, He was made of a woman, and He was made under the law.

There can be no question but that the Lord Jesus observed the seventh day as the sabbath during the thirty-three years He sojourned upon the earth. That is, He observed it so far as it was possible *for* one individual to do it. The sabbath being a national matter, could only be properly observed by a nation. Our Lord found the observance of the sabbath encrusted with rabbinical evasions and restrictions, which He failed to heed. This caused Him to be charged with sabbath breaking by the religious authorities of His day. In connection with these restrictions imposed by the Pharisees, He declared,

**The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath. Mark 2:27-28.**

Some claim that this statement extended the sabbath-keeping obligation to all men, but since the sabbath is never by any previous or subsequent Scripture applied to the Gentiles, it seems strange indeed that a universal extension of the sabbath would be made in such ambiguous terms. In the Greek the definite article is found before both occurrences of the word *man* making it *the man*, that is, the man to whom it was given. Furthermore, the word *man* is used well over 300 times in the Old Testament when referring to Israel alone. The Pharisees had placed the sabbath above the good of man and contrary to the good of man. Christ placed these things in the proper order.

Those who hold that the proper design for a true Christian life is to imitate the life of Christ are inclined to feel that He should be imitated in the matter of sabbath observance. But they must remember that He was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), that He observed the Passover (Luke 22:42, 22:15); and that He never married, never had a home, and that He limited His service and ministry to the people



of Israel (Matt. 15 :24). The life of an Israelite who lived under the law cannot be the pattern for a Gentile believer who lives under the present dispensation of the grace of God. The fact that Christ observed the seventh day as the sabbath does not in any way fix it as an obligation upon His people under God's present administration.

## **The Sabbath in the Acts Period**

In the Acts period two groups of believers are clearly indicated by God. These are called "Jews which believe" (Acts 21 :20), and "Gentiles which believe" (Acts 21 :25). What was God's will for one was not necessarily the will of God for the other. This explains why Paul fought so earnestly against the attempts to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2 :3-5) and then afterward permitted the circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16 :1-4). In 1 Corinthians 7 :18-20 God commanded these two groups to maintain their separation and to walk accordingly..

During the Acts period the believing Jew maintained the observance of his God-given sabbath, but the believing Gentile had no day to keep. When some of them tried to observe a day, it brought strong words of rebuke from Paul. See Galatians 4 :10-11. When the Acts period ended with the proclamation that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles", Israel's sabbath ceased and it will not be restored to them until the salvation of God returns to Israel. This takes place before the establishment of Israel in the Kingdom as seen from Matthew 24 :20.

Today we see a number of sincere people who are trying to observe the seventh day of the week as the sabbath. They are sometimes inclined to be quite critical of those who observe Sunday, even going so far as to say that all who observe the seventh day have taken upon themselves "the seal of God" while all who observe Sunday have taken upon themselves "the mark of the beast." This displays a complete lack of understanding as to what the "seal of God" and "the mark of the beast" is. I do not know what place they would give to those sincere and honest believers who walk humbly before their God seven days each week and who observe no days, times or years.

In all this talk about "keeping" and "observing" the sabbath and the first day, it can always be seen that no one ever bothers to define just what is meant by "keeping" and "observing." Some have said that the day you observe is the day you do not work, However, I know many men who never work on either Saturday or Sunday. Do they observe both days? Others seem to have the idea that the day you observe is the day on which you "go to church." This is as ridiculous as it is childish. Therefore, we see those who claim to be observing the seventh day busily engaged in conducting services, preaching the gospel and undertaking many activities of this kind. They

excuse this by making a distinction between secular work and sacred work, a distinction that the Word of God knows nothing about.

### *The Sunday Question*

At this point, I feel that many readers of this pamphlet are saying, "But what about Sunday? Is it a day to be observed?" In answering these questions it will be necessary to consider three ideas that are current at this time.

First, there is the idea that the sabbath day has been changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week, therefore it is obligatory upon all men, and especially so upon all professing Christians, to observe Sunday as a "Christian Sabbath." Furthermore, it is held that the rules that governed the observance of the seventh day sabbath are now transferred to the first day sabbath.

Then, there is the idea that a new sabbath has been given, and while Saturday remains the Jewish sabbath, Sunday has been given as the Christian sabbath.

Finally, there is the conception that the first day of the week(Sunday), while not a Sabbath in any sense of the Word, is "the Lord's day" and should be kept or observed by all professing Christians. As a rule it is generally believed that this observance is not to be by a cessation of all activities, but by services, worship and preaching.

There are three major ideas that are most prevalent in regard to Sunday, therefore, let us examine them in order.

1. There is not a hint, intimation, or suggestion anywhere in all the Word of God that the sabbath day has been changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week. Furthermore, even if such a change could be shown, the sabbath would still be the peculiar possession of the nation of Israel. If I hire a man to work for me every Wednesday, then later change his work day to Thursday, that does not in any manner indicate that I have given the job to someone else. There is not so much as a single passage in all the New Testament that even hints that the sabbath has been changed, or that it has been taken from Israel and given to anyone else.

The attempts that have been made to take the rules that were given to regulate the observance of Israel's sabbath and use them as a guide to the observance of Sunday would be ludicrous, if the matter were not so serious. Only a very small part of the rules are taken, which in itself demonstrates pure self-will, and it brands all who do this as one who performs a *partial acceptance* of the law, which is far worse than no acceptance at all. The one who quotes "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy" as if this were spoken of the first day of the Week (Sunday) is guilty of wresting the Word of God and causing it to say something it has never said. I have as much right to

quote that as if it were spoken of Wednesday as anyone has to quote it as if it were spoken of Sunday.

The one who observes the first day of the week because of what God commanded concerning the seventh day of the week, or whose observance is in any way influenced by the law God gave through Moses, is, both by reason and Scripture committed to keep every feature of the seventh day sabbath as well as the whole Mosaic law. For example, the person who adopts even one feature of sabbath observance on the ground that it is commanded by the law, is bound by that same law never to build or kindle a fire in his dwelling upon the sabbath day, no matter which day he calls the sabbath.

There is no such thing in the Word of God as the "*Christian Sabbath*," and no man can be called a "sabbath desecrator" no matter what he does on the first day of the week. These words may shock and grieve many who are not instructed in the Word concerning these things, but when the full and accurate presentation of the truth of God is at stake, one cannot stop to consider whether someone is going to be shocked or grieved by it.

2. The idea that a new or additional sabbath has been given is also foreign to the Word of God. This is a fixed idea with many people, but it is a human conception that has no scriptural authority. If it is true, those who hold it should have no trouble in providing some definite statement from the Bible wherein this idea of a new or additional sabbath is set forth. The common practice of referring to Sunday as the sabbath day is wholly without warrant, and it springs from a lack of due consideration of what the Bible teaches. It reveals thoughts and words which have been formed by the traditions of men, but have not been reformed and refined by the Word of God. None will do this who obey the admonition to "**hold fast the form of sound words.**" **2 Timothy 1 :13.**

3. "But," someone may be saying, "the Bible speaks of the first day of the week" Of course it does, and it also speaks of the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth day of the week. This in itself means nothing. What it says about "the first day of the week" is important, but the mere mention, no matter how many times, has no meaning. Many people feel that everything is settled, that their beliefs rest upon a sure foundation, when they say "the Bible speaks of the sabbath" or "the Bible speaks of the first day of the week," or "the Bible speaks of baptism." From such facts nothing can be deduced, but from what it says about these subjects much truth can be gained.

The *King James Version* of the Bible speaks of "the first day of the week" eight

times. But before anyone seeks to build truth upon this statement, it would seem wise that this version be checked against the original so that one does not build upon a misleading translation. It is my conviction that the phrase *mia ton sabbaton* when correctly translated will read *one of the sabbaths* and not "the first day of the week" *Mia* means one, not *first*. The word *protos* means first, and it does not appear here. *Sabbaton* is plural and means *sabbaths* not "week"

Nevertheless, even if the translation were correct, the facts revealed in the eight occurrences of this phrase do not teach that Sunday is a day to be observed. The passages set forth that our Lord arose on that day, that certain disciples gathered to break bread on that day (which they also did the day following - Acts 20:7-11) and that gifts were to be set aside on that day in anticipation of a visit from Paul. Upon these meager facts and disputed translation a great superstructure has been built which is supposed to make Sunday a day to be observed or kept by all who profess faith in Christ. Its observance as a holy day is based solely upon the commandments of men and not upon any instruction from God. Not a line of Scripture can be found which authorizes, suggests or commands its observance as a day unto the Lord.

Those who insist that it is a day to be observed unto the Lord should be able to tell us where we will find divine instructions as to how to keep or observe it. Shall we make up our own rules, then brand everyone as a "sabbath breaker" who refuses to comply with our self-imposed rules for keeping a day?

There are many who feel they find support for the observance of Sunday in the term "the Lord's day" in Revelation 1 :10. They take this to mean that John was "in the Spirit" on Sunday, and that he called this "the Lord's day."

When anyone says that "the Lord's day" of Revelation 1:10 is the first day of the week, the assertion is supported only by the authority of the speaker, for it is a statement that cannot be proved. I have as much right to say that it refers to Tuesday as anyone has to say that it refers to Sunday, since there is nothing in the passage that shows that it refers to any day of the week

"But," someone will object, "you are being ridiculous - Tuesday could not possibly be the Lord's day." In answer, I ask, "then whose day is it?"

And if John were "in the Spirit" on Sunday, then what was his state on Saturday or Monday. The truth is that John was carried forward by the Spirit into the great day of the Lord and saw the things that will come to pass when that day is upon the earth.

It is my conviction that only by fully accepting and walking in the truth that the sabbath belongs to Israel, and that Sunday was never given by God to anyone as a day to be observed, that we can walk in harmony with the truth expressed in Romans 14 :5-6, Colossians 2 :16 and Galatians 4 :10-11.

**One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it. Romans 14:5-6.**

This passage gives abundant evidence that to these Gentiles, to whom these words were spoken, no one day was above another. If a man then, or a man now, wishes to set aside one day to the Lord he has every right to do so. But he must not wrest the Word of God in order to find scriptural support for his practice. That day can be Saturday, Sunday or Monday and the result will be that God will have more of his time just because he has dedicated one day to Him. In this country custom has made Sunday the most convenient for this purpose. There is no sin in either giving Sunday to the Lord as His day, or in giving Him all the days with no special significance upon anyone of them.

**Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon or of the sabbath days. Colossians 2:16.**

If men condemn us because of our failure to observe a day that they regard as a sabbath, let us treat their judgment with all the silent contempt that it deserves. We can appeal their harsh judgments directly to the throne of God and their judgment will be reversed by Him.

**Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed labor upon you in vain. Galatians 4:10-11.**

To many, Christianity is wholly a system of human works in which the man does something for God and from this merit before God is gained. Everything centers in them and their works, and the great truth that all of God's purposes center in Christ is not understood by them. They make everything of "God's holy church" which is the one they belong to; "God's holy ordinances" which are the ones they have selected; "God's holy commandments" which they never more than partially observe; and

"God's holy sabbath" which is the day on which instead of going to work they go to church. These four things make up the sum total of their religion, and when even one part of it is touched, they feel that someone is attacking the foundation upon which their "hope for heaven" rests.

In the administration of God under which we now live, the only service that anyone can perform for God is to proclaim the Word of God. Many means may be used in doing this, but the one who does not set forth the Word of God does not perform God any service.

As a student and teacher of the sacred Scriptures, I work with the Word of God and the lives of men. My aim with men is by the Word to bring them into a mature, individual and personal relationship with God, the Son of God and the Word of God. This relationship in its fullest expression has nothing to do with the observance of any day, whether it be Saturday, Sunday, Easter or Christmas. I want nothing to do with that type of ministry to be something or to do something on one day of each week or one day of each year.

To gain this end all ideas of the observance of days must be excluded from my own life, ministry and service. I must declare just what the Word declares about such things. I will never point any man to a day to be observed, an ordinance to be administered or an organization to be joined. I will point them to the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ in Whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. I will set forth the exceedingly precious value of pure faith in Him, a faith that is stripped of all religious trappings, ritual, ceremonies, observances, and sacraments - just Christ and Him alone. He is the one Who is worthy of such confidence.

### **In Conclusion**

In closing I feel inclined to say that just as I have a very definite respect and regard for such national institutions as the office of the President of the United States, and such national shrines as *Mount Vernon*, *The Lincoln Memorial* and *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, even so I have a very definite regard and respect for the national institution of Sunday as a day of rest. It has become a characteristic feature in our national life, and it is one feature that I trust will be perpetuated and emphasized. One day's rest in seven is a good thing, but to say that it is a divinely imposed obligation is to go beyond that which is written. We must not mar the Word of God to make it uphold some practice that we feel to be good.

**The End SS22**

