

God's Memorial

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The Sabbath is a memorial of what the Creator did during the first week of time. He wrought six days. He rested on the seventh day. Here is the origin of the week. The weekly cycle is not derived from anything in nature. Months are suggested by the phases of the moon; years, by the returning seasons; but the week can be traced only to the six days of creation, and the seventh of rest. The patriarchs reckoned time by weeks and sevens of days. Genesis 8:10-12; 29:27-28. The Sabbath was instituted in Eden, at the close of the first week, by three acts on the part of the Creator. First, God rested on the seventh day. Secondly, he placed his blessing upon the day.

Thirdly, he sanctified the day of his rest. He rested on the seventh day, and in this set an example for man. He next blessed the day upon which he had rested. He then sanctified, or "set apart to a sacred use," the day of his rest. He gave the first six days of the week to man, in which to obtain a livelihood, and reserved the seventh day to himself, to be used sacredly by man.

The great God was not wearied with the six days of creation. His rest upon the seventh day means simply that on that day he ceased to create. Nor did man in Eden need rest from toil, as since the fall. In fact, rest from labor is not a leading feature of the Sabbatic institution. The fourth commandment makes no reference to man's physical wants of a day of rest. neither does it speak of his spiritual necessities of a day of public worship.

It gives quite another reason for the Sabbath. Here it is: "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 20:11. This reason relates to what God did in the first week of time. He has given no other. It is a reason as old as the world and will continue to be the reason why man should revere Jehovah's rest-day as long as the world shall continue. Man rests upon the day of the Sabbath in honor of the Creator. And wherever he may turn his eye, whether to the heavens, the earth, or the sea, there he beholds the Creator's work. As he rests upon the seventh day, he sees in the countless varieties of nature the wisdom and power of Him who created all in six days, and thus is led from nature up to nature's God. The Sabbath now becomes the cord that binds the created man to the infinite Creator. It is the golden chain that links earth to Heaven, and man to God. Had man always observed the Sabbath, there could not have been an idolater nor an atheist.

The Sabbath, as a memorial of what the Creator did during the first week of time, is now seen in its dignity and importance. It is the memorial of the living God. Man is to rest on the day of the week on which the Creator ceased to create. But those who belittle the Sabbatic institution to only serve man's physical wants of a day of rest, and to provide for him a day of public worship, and who see no higher design in it, are satisfied with a change of the day of the Sabbath. They think that a day on which the Creator did not rest will do quite as well as the day on which he did rest. With this limited view of the subject, why may they not be content with the change?

If a day of rest from toil, and a day for the public worship of God, are all the blessings secured to man by the Sabbath, the one-day-in-seven-and-no-day-particular theory looks quite plausible. For, certainly, man can rest his weary limbs, or weary brain, on one day of the week as well as on another. And if only a season of divine worship is to be secured, Sunday may answer for this purpose. In fact, one day in six might do as well for rest and worship as one day in seven, if rest and a day of public worship are the sum total of the reasons for the Sabbath. There is nothing in man's physical or spiritual wants to mark the number seven.

The original design of the Sabbath was for a perpetual memorial of the Creator. Yet it secures the seventh day of the week to man in his fallen condition, not only as a day of rest, but a day for public worship, in which to draw nigh to God and share his pardoning love. But these blessings, of comparative importance, can be obtained on any of the other six days of the week, and do not constitute the grand reason for the Sabbatic institution. That reason given in the law of the Sabbath is, in its importance, as much above the simple idea of repose from weary toil, and a day for public worship, as the heavens are higher than the earth. With this agree the words of the prophet: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shall honor him, not doing thy own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord." Isaiah 58:13-14.

Here the great object of the Sabbath is set forth. It is to honor God. Man is required to turn away his feet from the Sabbath, and refrain from seeking his own ways, words, and pleasure, on that day, not because he needs a day of rest, but because by so doing he can honor the great God. Those who keep the Sabbath with this object in view will call it a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honorable.

The fourth commandment points back to what God did during the first week of time. The creation and rest occupied the first week. Immediately following, Jehovah sanctified and blessed the day on which he had rested. In this way the seventh day became the holy Sabbath of the Lord for Adam and his posterity. It was ever to be observed by the race as the memorial of the living God.

Those who locate the institution of the Sabbath at Sinai, urge that no mention is made of Sabbath-keeping in the brief record of the book of Genesis, as proof that the Sabbath was made for the Jews alone. As evidence of the unsoundness of this position, please notice the following facts:--

1. The sacred record nowhere intimates that the Sabbath was instituted at Sinai, while it distinctly locates its institution at creation.
2. The Sabbath being made for man, Mark 2:27, there are no reasons why the Jews alone should enjoy its blessings. All men have need of it as much as they.
3. The facts connected with the giving of the manna show that the Israelites understood the obligations of the Sabbath; that some of the people violated these sacred obligations, and were reproofed by Jehovah, thirty days before they saw mount Sinai. See Exodus 16-19.

They came to the Wilderness of Sin, where the manna was first given, on the fifteenth day of their second month. On the sixth day of the week they gathered a double portion of the manna, a quantity sufficient for that day and for the Sabbath which followed. Moses said to the people, "This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." On the seventh day, 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. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. 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 on the sixth day the bread of two days."

Here we see that the Sabbath was understood, and its violation was rebuked by Jehovah. But the Israelites had not yet seen Sinai. Indeed, they did not come to the mount from which the commandments were proclaimed, until thirty days from the time the manna was first given.

Here is a nail driven in a sure place, and ministers and people should cease to assert that the Sabbath was first given at Sinai, till they have searched the sacred narrative with greater care. The original plan of the Sabbath contemplated its perpetual observance as long as the Creator and created man should exist. It does not point forward to redemption. It was instituted in Eden before redemption was promised. It looks back to creation.

It was made for man before the fall. And it will exist during man's future life upon the new earth, in all its original significance and glory. We have seen the Sabbath based upon the great facts of the creation in six days, Jehovah's rest upon the seventh day, and his sanctifying and blessing the day of his rest. As long as these continue to be facts, so long will the Sabbath continue. Redemption does not propose the creation of a new world as the inheritance of the redeemed. "Behold I make all things new," says the Redeemer. He does not say I will make all new things. This world redeemed from the curse and all its results, will be the eternal possession of the righteous. And notwithstanding the work of redemption, the great facts connected with the creation week will ever be vividly impressed upon the immortal minds of the redeemed. Thus said the prophet: "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, said the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, said the Lord." Isaiah 66:22-23.

There is no point of time in the past when all flesh have come to worship before the God of Heaven on the Sabbath; and this can never be while the wheat and tares, the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one, grow together; and these will not be separated until the harvest, which is the end of the world. This universal observance of the memorial of the great God will be seen only in the immortal state, when from one Sabbath to another, and from one new moon to another, all flesh shall come to worship before the Lord. "What! the moon in heaven?" no, not in such a heaven as that of which the poet sings, "Beyond the bounds of time and space, Look forward to that heavenly place, The saints' secure abode."

Beyond space there would be no room for the moon, nor for the sun; neither would there be room for the resurrected saints, possessing bodies like their Lord's resurrected, glorious body; and beyond the bounds of time there would be no need of the sun and the moon, which are God's great timekeepers. We are not looking for a general smashup in the universe, and then the creation of all new things. It is this planet that has revolted. And the Redeemer, who is coming to bring it back into allegiance to the government of

God, says, "Behold, I make all things new." The revolt did not involve the sun, moon, and the other planets. Redemption will not change these heavenly bodies. When the Restorer shall have established the immortal saints in the new earth, it will continue its revolutions, and the sun and moon will measure off days, and months, and years, as long as eternal ages shall roll. The redeemed shall have right to the tree of life, which Adam lost through disobedience. That tree yields twelve manner of fruits each month. And why may not the word of the prophet, in reference to all flesh appearing before the Lord from one new moon to another, be fulfilled when the entire family of the redeemed shall come each month to partake of the new fruit of the tree of life?

But to return to God's memorial: The position taken in these pages presents the one-day-in-seven-and-no-day-in-particular, or one-seventh part- of-time-theory in its true light. If the Sabbath was made for man, for the simple reason that he needed rest from physical toil, and a day of worship, one day may answer as well as another. But if it be a memorial of Jehovah's rest, the seventh, and no other day of the week, is the day of the Sabbath. Sabbatarians are charged with being great sticklers for the day. And so they are. Sabbath signifies rest. Man is required by the fourth commandment to celebrate the rest-day of the Lord, or the day on which the Lord rested. God rested on the seventh day. He hallowed the seventh day. Hence, the seventh day, and no other, is the day of the Sabbath. Change the day of the Sabbath, and you cease to celebrate the rest of the Lord. If God rested on one day in seven and no day in particular, man may do the same; but if God rested on the seventh day of the first week, acceptable Sabbath-keeping is the celebration of the seventh day of each succeeding week.

The American people celebrate their national independence on the fourth day of July. And why? because July 4, 1776, patriotic men signed the Declaration of independence. The men of this nation are great sticklers for the day; and well they may be. Should they change our national celebration from the day on which the Declaration of independence was signed, to a day on which it was not signed it would lose its significance. It would cease to be a celebration of our independence. Let the people of this country celebrate their independence on the twenty-fifth day of December, and let the Declaration of Independence be read from every orator's stand on that day, as is customary on the fourth of July, and the American people would be regarded as a nation of simpletons.

And what Jew ever thought of observing one-three-hundred-and sixty-fifth part of time, or one day in three hundred and sixty-five and no day in particular, and calling that the Passover? And we might as well talk of celebrating our national independence on one day in three hundred and sixty-five and no day in particular, as to talk of celebrating the rest day of Jehovah upon one day in seven and no day in particular. The veriest American idiot that can recollect of every hearing about George Washington or the Declaration of Independence, might well laugh at the folly of changing the day of our national celebration. Verily, as our Lord has said, the men of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

It is only in matters of religion that people seem to be satisfied with that which, in regard to any other subject, would be considered consummate folly. And do these men who use the one-day-in-seven-and-no-day-in particular theory advocate a change of the Sabbath from the rest-day of the Father, to the resurrection-day of the Son? Then we inquire of them, Who ever thought of celebrating the resurrection of Christ on one day in seven and no day in particular? If they say that this can be done, then we inquire again, Where is the change of the day of the Sabbath? Was it a change from one day in seven and no day in particular of the former dispensation, to one day in seven and no day in particular of the present dispensation? This would be "confusion worse confounded."

And to those who assert that redemption, as a greater work, is to be celebrated on the first day of the week, as creation was anciently to be celebrated on the seventh day of the week, we would say, We only have your word for that. Please notice these facts:--

1. The Bible is silent relative to redemption's being greater than creation. Who knows that it is?
2. The Bible is silent as to the observance of a day to commemorate redemption. Who knows that a day should be kept for that purpose?
3. We have, in the Lord's Supper, and baptism, memorials of the two great events in the history of the Redeemer's work for man. These are appropriate.
4. There is no fitness in keeping a day of weekly repose to commemorate the agonies of the crucifixion of Christ, or the activities of the morning of his resurrection.
5. But if a day of the week should be kept to celebrate man's redemption, which should it be? the day on which he shed his blood for our sins? the day on which he rose for justification? of the day on which he ascended to the Father, to intercede for sinners?

The day of the crucifixion, when the greatest event for man's redemption occurred, has the first claim. The apostle does not say that we have redemption through the resurrection; but he does say, "We have redemption through his blood." Eph. 1:7. Now if a day should be kept to celebrate redemption, should it not the day on which he shed his blood?

Redemption is not completed; but in the Lord's Supper and baptism, are two memorials of the greatest events that have occurred in connection with this work for man. Neither of these are weekly memorials. Baptism may be received by the believer on any day of the week; and it is said of the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the Son of God, without reference to any particular day, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this up, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Corinthians 11:26. The memorials point back to the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ. God's great memorial points back to the day of his rest. And why not let all these remain, answering the purpose for which they were instituted? Why should the work of creation be lost sight of in the work of redemption? Why not celebrate both here? Both are equally remembered hereafter. it is said of the redeemed:-

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Revelation 5:9. The same also "cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Revelation 4:10-11. Here the redeemed are represented as ascribing praise to both the Creator and the Redeemer.

And again, every created intelligence in the universe, in joyful sympathy with man in view of his redemption, is represented in chapter 5:13 as ascribing "blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto Him that sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

We here see that the redeemed, with all the enrapturing facts of redemption completed before them, do not lose sight of the creation. The Creator shares their adoration equally with the Redeemer. How then must Adam have felt, when, in the Garden of Eden, he first awoke to all the glories of this creation which the redeemed so joyfully remember! Fresh from the hand of his Creator, he springs to life in all the vigor of perfect manhood.

With an intellect capable of appreciating the glories of Eden, and comprehending the grandeur and dignity of his position, and with a heart unsullied by sin, how must he have turned in gratitude and adoration toward the mighty Maker of himself and all these glories! If the redeemed could cast their crowns before Jehovah in reverent worship, in view of a creation accomplished over six thousand years before their song of praise was uttered, how must every fiber of Adam's being have thrilled with emotions of thanksgiving and adoration to the beneficent Author of his creation, as he stood there in Eden, enraptured with the strange delight of a new existence! And how could he best express the emotions of his heart? Would it not be by celebrating, amid all the surrounding glories of his Eden home, a day of rest in honor of his God? Say not that Adam had no occasion for the Sabbath in Eden. It was the very means by which he would rise into communion with his Maker and offer the service of a grateful heart to him from whom he had just received the gift of life and all its blessings.

And if the Sabbath was thus appropriate, thus necessary in Eden, what shall we say of it since the fall? With sin came man's estrangement from God, and his proneness to forget his Maker, and wander away from him. How much more needful the Sabbath, then, that he might not entirely break away from the moorings which held him to the heavenly world. The flood of sin and crime has rolled broader and deeper with each succeeding year; and the further we come from Paradise, the weaker and more prone to sin do we find the race, and hence more in need of God's great memorial?

Did Adam, while yet sinless in Eden, surrounded with all its heavenly influences, and in free and open converse with his Maker, need the Sabbath? How much more, when, with the gates of Paradise forever closed against him, he could no longer speak face to face with his Creator, but must henceforth grapple with the sinful promptings of his own heart, and grope his way amid the moral darkness that began to settle upon the world when the glorious light of Eden was obscured by sin!

And if needed then by Adam, how much more still by Abel, whose eyes had never looked upon the beautiful garden, and who had never personally experienced the nearness to Heaven which Adam there enjoyed! And it was still more essential to the spiritual wants of the race in the days of Enoch and the more degenerate age of Noah, when the influence of Eden, like the last rays of twilight from the setting sun, were fading from the hearts of men. Abraham needed it still more to save him from the idolatry of his father's house; and Moses and the Jewish nation, yet more, to keep them from the open apostasy of the heathen nations around them. But more than Abraham, to Moses, or to the Jews, was the holy Sabbath a necessity to the church in the gospel dispensation, when the man of sin was to arise, and oppose, and exalt himself above all that is called God; when there should be a tendency to multiply feasts and festivals, uncalled for by the Scriptures, in honor of Christ, and to rend the Sabbath of Jehovah with Jewish ceremonies, and sweep it away with them.

And now we have come down nearly six thousand years from the gates of Paradise. Through all this time has sin reigned, and iniquity abounded, and the hearts of men grown less and less susceptible of divine impressions and in the same proportion more prone to forget the Creator. And can we dispense with the Sabbath now? True, the dawn of Eden restored is visibly approaching; but the world is farther from God than ever before. Infidelity and atheism run riot, and seemingly the race would fain banish all thoughts and love of God from mind and heart. More than ever, then, is the Sabbath now needed, to save men from utter apostasy.

With all the original reasons for the institution, the accumulated necessities of six thousand years of sin now call upon us to throw all possible safeguards around this sacred institution. If ever a memorial of the great God and a golden link to bind man to Heaven, was needed, it is needed now. And the necessity of this institution will even yet increase through the few remaining days of peril. Can we dispense with it? never. More and more sacredly should we cherish it, which with earnest hearts we breathe the prayer, "Let earth, O Lord, again be thine, As ere with vengeance cursed; And let the holy Sabbath shine As glorious as at first."

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