

# GRACE

by

Lewis Sperry Chafer, D.D.  
President of the Evangelical Theological College, Dallas, Texas;  
Professor of Systematic Biblical Theology

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## **THE LIFE UNDER GRACE (continued) SECTION SIX THE SABBATH, A TEST QUESTION**

The distinction between the reign of law and the reign of grace is at no point more sharply drawn than in the question of the observance of the seventh day of the week or the first day of the week; for these two days are symbolical of the dispensations to which they are related.

Likewise, at no point is personal religious prejudice, which is born of early training and sentiment, more assertive than on the Sabbath question.

It was His liberal teaching on the observance of the Sabbath which, more than aught else, provoked the wrath of the Jewish leaders against CHRIST, and, it may be observed, there is no religious subject to-day which so draws out personal convictions and opinions.

The reason is evident. Few have really comprehended the exact character and principle of grace. To many, Christianity is a system of human works and character building from which merit accrues. And the observance of a Sabbath day presents extraordinary opportunities for the exercise of meritorious works. The question is a far deeper one than the observance, or the manner of observance, of a day. It is the fundamental question whether grace is to reign supreme in place of law, or whether it is to be co-mingled with law. The roots of this problem reach down to the bedrock issue which forms the very structure of the two opposing principles of pure law and pure grace.

For its solution, the question demands more than a superficial opinion.

Truly the choice of a particular day and the manner of its observance is a test question as to the individual's intelligent adjustment to the whole grace revelation. As there can be no proper co-

mingling of the reign of law and the reign of grace, there can be no proper co-mingling of elements which, according to the Scriptures, are the essential features of these widely different days. A "*Christian Sabbath*" is a misnomer, and the very use of the term indicates inexcusable inattention to Bible terms, and an unchallenged freedom of mind and heart which is willing to sacrifice the richest treasures of grace by co-mingling them with law.

It is not a problem of interpretation; it is a question of whether personal sentiment, prejudice, or ignorance, shall blindly override the very foundation of the right divisions of Scripture.

These two days, typical of two opposing governing principles and two great dispensations, are absolutely unrelated. Of the whole Decalogue, it is the Sabbath-day commandment only which is not carried forward in any manner whatsoever into the reign of grace, nor could it be. Failure to base the distinction between these age-representing days upon the essential character of their respective relationships - pure law and pure grace - is resulting in an almost universal confusion of mind on the subject among Christians, and this, in turn, provides the opportunity for present-day legalists to promote their Christ-rejecting heresies.

Intelligent comprehension of pure law is clarifying to the mind, for its very oppositeness to pure grace safeguards a clear comprehension of grace. On the other hand, the greatest foe of such clear comprehension of pure grace and its issues is the confusing, soul-wrecking and unscriptural admixture of these opposing principles. This admixture is ruinous at every point; but at no point is it more destructive of Scriptural distinctions than in the confusion of a Jewish Sabbath with the Christian's day - the Lord's day, or Sunday.

Consideration at length might be given to many vital differences between the law obligations and the obligations under grace, such as circumcision, tithing, and sacrifices; but unlike the Sabbath question, these issues are self-adjusting when the glory of grace in some measure is comprehended. To many, on the other hand, the Sabbath question bulks largest as an essential of their religion. It, therefore, demands particular consideration.

The reasons for this discussion are four:

- (1) It vitally determines the individual's conception of, and blessing in, grace.
- (2) It, of necessity, determines the character of the believer's conduct and measure of comprehension of his scriptural obligation to GOD.
- (3) It is the central issue of a misleading heresy. And,
- (4) it is now urged as a national reform, in which it is proposed to legislate a Jewish Sabbath on a Christ-rejecting world.

This consideration of the Sabbath question is based on the preceding analysis of the principles of law and grace and this discussion cannot be followed clearly apart from an understanding of what has gone before. So, also, in so far as an earnest appeal may avail, the reader is besought to leave prejudice behind, and to stand on the uncompromised "**Thus saith the Lord.**"

Two major aspects of this subject are here considered.

- (1) The Biblical testimony regarding the Jewish Sabbath, and

(2) The Biblical testimony concerning the Christian's "*Lord's day*."

To this is added

(3) A consideration of certain current errors.

## 1. THE BIBLICAL TESTIMONY REGARDING THE JEWISH SABBATH

This theme is to be taken up in sub-divisions in which the Jewish Sabbath is considered as related to various periods of time:

First. *The Period from Adam to Moses.*

Two theories obtain concerning the question of Sabbath observance during this period. There are those who contend that the Sabbath was committed to man in Eden, and there are those who contend that the Sabbath was given to Israel only, at the hand of Moses.

The first theory is usually advanced with a view to applying the institution of the Sabbath to all men before the law even was given, in order that the Sabbath law may be treated as now applicable to all men, even after the termination of the Mosaic law in the Cross. This form of argument is not restricted to the Seventh-Day legalists; it is employed by many writers and religious leaders who are attempting to transfer the Biblical authority concerning the Jewish Sabbath to the observance of the Lord's day.

These, by Judaizing Christianity, are obscuring the truth about grace.

When it is claimed that the Sabbath obtained from Adam to Moses it is said: "*The Sabbath was divinely sanctified at creation.*" This sanctification, it is true, is clearly stated in 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."**

When it is assumed that the Sabbath was imposed on man at Eden, it is based on the supposition that this passage so teaches; which, however, the passage does not necessarily imply.

And it should also be remembered that Genesis was not written until Moses' time, and, when seeking for Biblical evidence regarding the pre-Mosaic observance of the seventh day it will be found that, unlike other religious activities, such as prayer, circumcision (Cf John 7:22), and sacrifices the observance of which is recorded of that period, there is no mention of a Sabbath observance from creation to Moses.

It is incredible that this great institution of the Sabbath could have existed during all these centuries and there be no mention of it in the Scriptures dealing with that time.

The words of Job, who lived five hundred years and more before Moses, offer an illustration.

His experience discloses the spiritual life of the pre-Mosaic saint, having no written Scriptures, and striving to know his whole duty to GOD. Job and his friends refer to creation, the flood, and many details of human obligation to GOD; but not once do they mention the Sabbath. Again, it is impossible that this great institution, with all that it contemplated of relationship between GOD and man, could have existed at that time and not have been mentioned in any portion of the argument of the book of Job.

There is little force in the contention that a seven-day week was recognized as early as Jacob's time, and therefore a Sabbath day must have existed which marked off the week. The seven-day week is the natural fourth part of a lunar month and does not necessarily demand a Sabbath day with religious significance for its measurement. Likewise, there is little force in the suggestion that Chinese history hints at the observance of one sacred day in every week. Such argument, even if true, should not be set over against the positive testimony of the Scriptures.

There is one passage which determines this question beyond all discussion.

The following quotation from the confession of the priests and Levites under Nehemiah definitely fixes the time of the institution of the Sabbath: "**Thou camest 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 commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant**" (Nehemiah 9:13,14).

The Sabbath given to Israel as a sign (Exodus 31:12-17), was never given to Gentiles. There is no record that Gentiles ever recognized the Sabbath, either between Adam and Moses, or between Moses and CHRIST. The Sabbath is of the law; but the law did not begin to reign until Moses (Romans 5:12-14). \*

\* Ezekiel 20:10-12 is equally important in fixing the exact time when the Sabbath law was imposed. We read: "**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.**"

Likewise, from the historical narrative given in Exodus, chapter 16, it will be seen that the day which was seven days, or one full week, previous to that Sabbath which, so far as Scripture records, was first observed by man was not kept as a Sabbath according to the Mosaic law; for on that day, which was seven days previous to the first recorded Sabbath, the children of Israel are said to have journeyed from Elim to the Wilderness of Sin - a distance of over twenty miles.

It is to be concluded, then, that the Sabbath was imposed upon Israel only and as a part of the law as given by Moses.

Second, *The Period from Moses to CHRIST*.

The Sabbath began to be observed by Israel from the time of its institution through Moses. Invested with the character of a sign between the Lord and the nation Israel, it was in no sense extended to Gentiles. These facts are disclosed in the following Scriptures:

**"The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: everyone 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" (Exodus 31:12-17).**

Nothing but blind prejudice could apply this or any other Old Testament Scripture concerning the Sabbath, to the Gentiles. The Sabbath was a part of Israel's law, and it was the possession of that law which distinguished that nation from all other peoples of the earth.

It is equally erroneous to insist that the Sabbath was always celebrated on the last day of the week. The Sabbath, but for necessary exceptions, was the seventh in a series of seven, whether days or years. Of necessity it often fell on other days of the week as well as on Saturday. There were at least fifteen Sabbaths which were fixed dates in their given month, and these Sabbaths fell on those particular dates regardless of the day of the week. \*

\* From Leviticus 23:37, 38, it has been claimed by some that these fixed Sabbaths were extra Sabbaths which were added to the regular Sabbaths. This claim, however, is not supported by Numbers 28:9, 10. The comparison of these important Scriptures reveals the fact that the word **"besides"** of Leviticus 23:37, 38, does not indicate more Sabbaths; but rather refers to additional offerings to be made over and above the regular Sabbath offerings.

In one instance, seven Sabbaths were counted from the fifteenth day of the month, and the day following that last Sabbath of the seven, was Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15, 16). These seven Sabbaths, it is evident, became pre-determined dates by arbitrary reckoning from the first Sabbath. So, likewise, the day that CHRIST was in the tomb was a fixed Sabbath. It was the fifteenth of Abid, which by divine arrangement in that particular year fell on a Saturday. That this was a fixed Sabbath is proven by the fact that the day before was **"preparation"** day (Mark 15: 42), which day was determined for the fourteenth of that month (Exodus 12:2, 6).

Again, certain working days were established days. The lamb must be taken on the tenth day of the first month and be killed, roasted with fire, and eaten on the fourteenth day of the month. Likewise, Abid sixteenth could in no wise have been a Sabbath for that date was appointed as the

beginning of harvest (Deuteronomy 16:9. Cf Leviticus 23:15). All these labors would have been direct violations of the Sabbath law; yet these ceremonies were appointed for certain pre-determined dates, and from time to time must inevitably have been in conflict with the pre-determined Sabbaths.

By all of this it is evident that the sacred character of the day belonged to its relative place in a series of seven days, and not to a particular day of the week.

During the period from Moses to CHRIST in which the Sabbath obtained under the direct sanction of GOD, it was, as the word Sabbath indicates, a day of physical rest. It was binding on the whole nation Israel, and death was the penalty for its violation. No fire was to be kindled, no food prepared, no journey undertaken, no buying or selling permitted, and no burden to be borne. Even the land was to have its Sabbaths (Exodus 31:12-17; 35:3; 16:22-26; Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15-21; Leviticus 25: 4; II Chronicles 36:21).

The Sabbath law, like all of the law, was so poorly observed that the Lord finally carried the nation into captivity with the declared purpose that the land might enjoy its Sabbaths.

The Sabbath was inter-related with the law, just as it is embedded in the heart of the Decalogue.

The exact manner of its observance is revealed only in the teachings of Moses, and since the law was a covenant of human works, the Sabbath was the divine provision for rest under that covenant. The modern conception of a Sabbath, isolated from the laws which governed it, and adapted to the Christian dispensation as the day of religious activity, public meetings, Christian service, and worship, is entirely out of harmony with every Scripture bearing on the Sabbath.

It is taught by some that although the laws which conditioned the manner of Sabbath observance have ceased, the recognition of the day, whether it be Saturday, or Sunday, remains as a binding obligation.

The result of such teaching is the imposition of the observance of a day without any exact instruction as to the manner of such observance. This teaching is both inconsistent and unscriptural. Moreover, the unscriptural inconsistency is greatly increased when the celebration of the Sabbath is changed from Saturday to Sunday, and is imposed on Gentiles.

The Sabbath was a vital institution under the reign of the law. It depended on the entire law system for its proper observance, and the law system depended on the Sabbath for its normal action. The complete legal system stands, or falls, together. The Mosaic age was given over to the uncomplicated functioning of the entire law system; but that age, and all that characterized it, was, when CHRIST died, superseded by the reign of grace.

Third. *The Period Represented by the Gospels.*

Much confusion concerning the Sabbath is due to a failure to recognize the peculiar character of the period represented by the Gospels.

It should be remembered that CHRIST was first:

- a "**minister of the circumcision**";
- He was "**made under the law**"; and
- He lived and wrought under the law.

The law did not pass at His birth. It passed at His death.

During the days of His ministry, He recognized, kept, and enforced the Sabbath as an integral part of the whole Mosaic system. True, He insisted that the Mosaic system, and the Sabbath in particular, be delivered from the encrusted teachings of men which had been superimposed on the law of Moses.

These man-made additions to the law were held by the Jews to be as binding and sacred as the very Word of GOD.

Because He ignored all else but the Word of GOD, CHRIST appeared as a liberalist on the question of the Sabbath. He also claimed to be "**Lord of the sabbath**," which He was, and by virtue of that position, He had authority to change the Sabbath, or, if He chose, to abolish it forever. A greater than Moses, through whom the law came, was in their midst. It is certain that He purposed to rescue the Sabbath from being an enslaving institution and to restore its functions as a benefit to man. This He announced when He said: "**The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.**" That is, man was not made to be sacrificed for a day; but the day was made for the blessing of man.

Before His death, the Sabbath was one of the most important issues in the experience and ministry of CHRIST. However, it is both obvious and suggestive that He never mentioned that day in the upper-room discourse, nor is that day once mentioned as an obligation in all of His post-resurrection ministry. It is inconceivable that the Sabbath, which was so vital a part of the Mosaic system, should be omitted from these great age-characterizing teachings of CHRIST, if it was the purpose of GOD that this Jewish day should have any place in the present reign of grace.

It has also been claimed that CHRIST extended the Sabbath-keeping obligation to all men, when He said:

**"The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."**

This issue turns on the exact meaning of the word man as here used. Did CHRIST signify by this statement that the Jewish Sabbath was by His authority extended to all men? Or did He use the word man in its more limited sense as applying only to the nation Israel?

Two facts determine the answer:

- (1) The Sabbath is never by any subsequent Scripture applied to Gentiles, and
- (2) the word man is used in the Old Testament no less than 336 times when referring to Israel alone, and many times in the New Testament when referring only to Christians.

It is said:

- "Christ is the head of every man";
- the Spirit "is given to every man";
- "If any man build on this foundation";
- "Every man shall have praise";
- "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

In all these Scriptures the word man has only the limited meaning. It is therefore evident that CHRIST said, in harmony with all Scripture, that the Sabbath was made for Israel; for there is no Biblical evidence that CHRIST ever imposed the Jewish Sabbath on either Gentiles or Christians; but true to the law, He did recognize its important place and obligation in relation to Israel until the reign of the law should be terminated through His death.

#### Fourth. *The Period Represented by the Acts and the Epistles.*

In considering the Sabbath question, great importance must be attributed to the exact character of those teachings of the New Testament which come after the founding of Christianity through the death and resurrection of CHRIST, and by the advent of the Spirit on Pentecost.

It should be observed first that the law, as a rule of conduct, is not once applied to the Christian, and that these Scriptures by overwhelming revelation, assert that the law has passed, through the death of CHRIST. They assert that the law has ceased both as a means of justification, and as a rule of life for the one who is justified (John 1:16, 17; Romans 6:14; 7:1-6; II Corinthians 3:1-18; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:19-25).

If it is claimed that the Decalogue, in which the Sabbath is embedded, was not of the law, and therefore was not terminated with the death of CHRIST, this contention is disposed of completely by the reference in Romans 7:7-14 to the last of the commandments, in which Scripture this commandment is explicitly mentioned as "**the law.**"

So, also, according to II Corinthians 3:7-14, that which was "**written and engraven in stones**" - the Decalogue, including the Sabbath day - is "**done away**" and "**abolished.**"

It should be observed next that if an issue so vital as was the Sabbath under the law is imposed on the Church, it is incredible

- (1) that the early Christians would not be reported as having at some time discharged their personal obligation to the Sabbath, or
- (2) that the necessity of recognizing the Sabbath would not be somewhere incorporated in the new teachings of grace.

Turning to these Scriptures we discover:

#### 1. *The Sabbath in the Book of The Acts.*

The word Sabbath is used nine times in the Acts, and wherever it is referred to as a day which is observed, it is related only to the unbelieving Jews, who, as would be expected, perpetuated, and who still perpetuate, the observance of the Sabbath day. Not once in this Book is it stated, or



even implied, that Christians kept a Sabbath day. It is said that the Apostle Paul went into the synagogue of the Jews and reasoned with them every Sabbath; but this can imply nothing more than that he took advantage of their gathering together on that day in order that he might preach to them. Such may be the experience of any missionary to the Jews to-day.

## 2. The Sabbath in the Epistles.

Turning to the Epistles, it will be seen in this portion of the Scriptures, as in the Book of Acts, that no Christian is said to have observed a Sabbath day. It is highly probable that some in the early church who were drawn into the observance of the law were also complicated with issues of Sabbath keeping; but the Spirit of GOD has omitted every such incident, if such there was, from the pages of Scripture. Thus the Inspired Record does not reveal the complication of one believer with the Jewish Sabbath, even as an error in conduct; nor are sinners termed Sabbath breakers.

Upon examination of the direct injunctions and doctrinal teachings of the Epistles, it is discovered that the word Sabbath is used but once, the term seventh day is mentioned in one passage only, and the legalistic observance of a day is referred to but once.

These passages deserve particular attention:

Colossians 2:16, 17. In the context in which this Scripture is found, the Apostle warns believers against any complicity with the law, or works-covenant, since they have been transferred to a position under grace. The passage states that they have been made "**complete**" in CHRIST, to which estate nothing could ever be added; hence for the one who is "**in Christ**," the objective of all meritorious works is already gained, and the legal obligation to do good works is forever met (v. 10).

The believer is also said to be "**circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.**"

Therefore, since the flesh, the one thing the law proposed to control, is, in the sight of GOD, put away, there is no need of the law.

The Jewish child was circumcised on the eighth day, which was the first day of a new week following the passing of a completed week. The circumcision on the eighth day, or first day of a new week, typified the deliverance from the old creation which would be accomplished for believers through the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead; for in that death He bore all the curse of the old creation. For this reason the believer under grace is not called upon to celebrate any aspect of the old creation which was represented by the Sabbath (v. 11).

The one who is saved has been "**buried with him in baptism, wherein [the baptism] also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God [his own faith in GOD's power], who hath raised him from the dead.**"

The use of the aorist tense in connection with the reference to a burial with Him in baptism, places that burial as being contemporaneous with the circumcision just mentioned. Therefore it is

evident that the baptism with the Spirit which vitally relates the believer to CHRIST is in view (I Corinthians 12:13. cf Galatians 3:27). In that baptism, as in no other, the Christian partakes of all that CHRIST is, and all that CHRIST has done. He shares in CHRIST's crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-10). With the old creation thus buried in the tomb of CHRIST, the believer is in no wise obligated to any observance related to the old creation (v. 12).

Again, the believer has been delivered from the law by no less an undertaking than the nailing of the law with its handwritings and ordinances to the Cross.

After this great transaction, how can the child of GOD reasonably recognize the law in any respect whatsoever (v. 14)? To the one who is thus complete in CHRIST, circumcised in CHRIST, buried with CHRIST, and delivered from the authority of all handwritings and ordinances, the Apostle writes: **"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days [day]: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [substance] is Christ."**

All these were essential features of the law (I Chronicles 23:31; II Chronicles 2: 4; 31:3), and as such were to cease in the present age of Israel's chastisement (Hosea 2:11), and are to be reinstated in the coming kingdom (Ezekiel 45:17).

They were but shadows of the Substance - CHRIST. Having the Substance, the believer is warned against turning to the mere shadow. According to this Scripture, the law, which included the Sabbath day, is abolished. If it is objected that the reference in this passage is to extra ceremonial Sabbaths, the contention cannot be sustained; for the words here used are *ton sabbaton*, which are the exact words that are invariably used to designate the regular Jewish Sabbath.

It is significant, then, that in all the Epistles, wherein the believer's obligation under grace is set forth, the only use of the word Sabbath is under absolute prohibition concerning its observance, and that it is there held to be in conflict with the most vital and superseding elements of grace.

Hebrews 4: 4. In this passage the one reference in all the Epistles to the seventh day is found.

We read:

**"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."**

As before, the occasion for this reference to a seventh day is explicit in the context. In the whole passage (4:1-13) Hebrew Christians are warned lest, as their fathers failed to enter into rest under Joshua (v. 8), they themselves should fail to enter, experimentally, into the rest provided in the finished work of CHRIST, of whom Joshua was but a type.

In the application of this passage, it may be noted that the rest under CHRIST is not for one day in the week, nor is it that Sabbath-rest which was due after a six-day strain of meritorious works. It is rather the abiding rest of faith in Another who, as Substitute, has wrought all the **"works of God."** This blessed rest is promised **"to him that worketh not."**

Likewise, it is in no sense the rest of death. It is rather the rest of CHRIST's imparted, resurrection life, and that life is ceaselessly active. The extent and character of the activity of the new life in CHRIST is a violation of every commandment which enjoins a Sabbath day of rest.

Galatians 4:9, 10. At this point in this Epistle, the Apostle chides the Galatian believers for observing "**days**" which are borrowed from the law, and tells them that by the keeping of legal days they have turned from grace to the law:

**"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years."** The phrase, "**weak and beggarly elements**," is a description of the character of the law. As a means of securing moral and spiritual conduct, the law was "**weak**" since its correct observance was impossible through the "**weakness of the flesh**" (Romans 8:3). As a source of heart-blessing, the law was "**beggarly**" (lit. *poverty stricken*) as compared to the riches of grace in CHRIST JESUS.

From this consideration of the Scriptures which describe and define the life of the believer after the Cross, it is notable that in these Scriptures there is no example of the observance of a Sabbath day by any believer, and no injunction for such observance. On the other hand, there is the most conclusive teaching concerning the complete ending of the law by the death of CHRIST, and the most faithful warnings lest the believer shall become ensnared by complicity with Sabbath-day observance.

#### Fifth. *The Sabbath in Prophecy.*

There are two distinct aspects of the Sabbath in prophecy:

- (1) Concerning its cessation in this age of Israel's chastisement, and
- (2) concerning its reestablishment when the present purpose in the Church is accomplished.

##### 1. *The cessation of the Sabbath.*

It is clear from Hosea 2:11 that the chastisement which was to fall on Israel, and which she is now experiencing, would be characterized by the cessation of all her solemn feasts and Sabbaths:

**"I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts."**

Such is the unalterable decree of GOD, and had one word of this prophecy failed, He would have been proven untrue. These Jewish observances which were to cease included all her Sabbaths. They ceased at the beginning of this age of grace, so far as any recognition from GOD is concerned. Otherwise, when will this prophecy be fulfilled? Uninstructed people may impose a solemn feast, or a Jewish Sabbath, upon themselves; but this will accomplish no more than the creation of an abnormal conscience which either accuses or excuses but never satisfies the heart. Such is the invariable effect of self-imposed law (Romans 2:14, 15).

## 2. *The reestablishment of the Sabbath.*

Upon the completion of the present divine purpose in the Church, Israel's Sabbaths will be reinstated.

This is assured both for the great tribulation which must precede the glorious coming of CHRIST, and for the kingdom age which follows that coming.

Concerning the great tribulation it is said: "**But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day**" (Matthew 24:20). No Christian has ever been inclined to offer this prayer. The time of its fulfillment does not concern him, nor does he have any relation to a Sabbath day. It will be in the "**time of Jacob's trouble**," and Israel's Sabbaths will then be observed again.

Concerning the kingdom age we read:

- "**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, saith the LORD**" (Isaiah 66:23);
- "**Thus saith the LORD God; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened**" (Ezekiel 46:1).

This is according to all prophecy concerning the kingdom. It is then that Israel shall "**do all his commandments**," including the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 30:8). The Sabbath must be reinstated; for it is a "**perpetual covenant**" and sign between the Lord and Israel, except for such time as He shall cause it to cease in His chastisement of that people (Exodus 31:16).

### Sixth. *The Exact Day.*

The supposition that an exact continuation of weekly Sabbaths is now being kept by all who observe the seventh day, is without foundation.

It should be noted:

(a) No day is holy in itself. From the natural standpoint, all days are alike and are equally subject to the same physical conditions. A day is holy by divine decree, and that decree is subject to change at the appointment of GOD. By no means did the day always fall on Saturday, nor were the Sabbaths always separated by six full working days.

(b) The Sabbath was to begin with sunset and end with sunset. This was simple enough when ordered for Israel in the small geographical boundaries of Palestine. It is far different when applied to the whole earth, and, as some dare to claim, to Heaven as well. No uniformity of the observance of an exact day is possible over the whole earth. While some are keeping Saturday on one hemisphere, others are keeping Sunday (as Sabbath) on the other. Should two persons start from a given point to go around the earth in opposite directions, and both observe each Sabbath from sundown to sundown, upon their return to the starting point, one would be observing Friday and the other Sunday. The question of observing an exact day from sunset is even more

perplexing in the far North. The sun sets there but once in six months. In that region, to be Biblical and exact, there must be a twelve-month Sabbath, and a week of seven years.

(c) The exact day in which GOD finished creation and rested is quite unknown. He rested on the seventh day; but it could hardly be proven that sundown on Friday night at a given place on the earth is the perpetuation of the exact moment when GOD began to rest from His work of creation. Who can trace the exact moment, day, or year, through Eden, the flood, the bondage in Egypt, and the dark ages? Yet apart from the assurance that Saturday at a given place on the earth is the exact day in rotation of weeks from creation, there is no basis for the claim to the sacredness of the exact time to be observed. Ignorant people are too often encouraged in the belief that they are actually celebrating the rest of GOD in creation when they observe the hours as they fall on Saturday in the locality where they chance to live.

It is therefore the manner of the observance of the day, and not the exact time, which is in question.

Shall it be the seventh day, or the first day? It must be one or the other; for there is nothing more unreasonable, illogical, and unbiblical, than the observance of the seventh day with confusion of Christian issues of worship and service, which is the practice of every sabbatarian, or the observance of the first day with confusion of the Sabbath law, which is the present practice of Christendom.

There would be little occasion for discussion of the question if the simple distinctions between law and grace were recognized.

## **II. THE BIBLICAL TESTIMONY CONCERNING THE LORD'S DAY**

This aspect of truth will be considered under two general divisions:

- (1) The reason for the observance of the day, and
- (2) The manner of observance of the day.

First, *The Reason for the Observance of the New Day.*

Even a cursory reading of those portions of Scripture which condition the daily life of the Christian will reveal the fact that, while every other fundamental principle of righteousness found in the Decalogue is restated in the teachings of grace, the Sabbath is not once imposed upon the believer.

On the contrary, as before shown, there is explicit warning against the observance of a Sabbath day. This is a fact of revelation which should not be overlooked.

Throughout the history of the church, a new day has been observed which superseded the Jewish Sabbath, and this change of days has not been contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures, as some insist; it has, rather, been according to the revealed plan and purpose of GOD.

There are certain Biblical reasons for this change:

1. *The Mosaic system has ceased.*

The whole Mosaic system, including its Sabbath day, has given way to the reign of grace.

To this important truth sufficient proof has already been presented, but in spite of the clearest Biblical statement on this subject, there are two groups of professing Christians who evidently do not receive this divine testimony.

- (a) Those who persist in the observance of the seventh day; and
- (b) those who observe the first day, but who invest it with the character of the Jewish Sabbath, and observe it on the authority of the law which was given to Israel by Moses.

The position of these two classes should be considered separately:

(a) Those who persist in the observance of the seventh day, do so on the claim that, while the law passed away in the death of CHRIST, the Decalogue is not a part of the law and therefore it, with its Sabbath day, has not been abolished. The answer to this subtle argument is clear and conclusive. Not only is the Decalogue included and embedded in the Old Testament statement of the law, but, in the New Testament, the Decalogue, as has already been shown, is distinctly said to be "**the law.**" In Romans 7:7, the Apostle Paul has written of the tendency of his own heart toward sin. He states: "**I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.**" Thus he refers to the Tenth Commandment as "**the law.**"

Furthermore, it is impossible now for any Jew or Gentile to keep the Ceremonial law of Moses, and thus it is evident that the New Testament warnings against law observance could not be a warning against an observance of the Ceremonial law.

The Ceremonial law required for its observance the presence of the Lord in the holy of holies, an altar, a priesthood and a temple in Jerusalem. All these prerequisites for the observance of the Ceremonial law were withdrawn at the beginning of the present age. The church of Rome, in its attempt to continue the law system, proposed to meet this difficulty by creating its own altar, temple service, and priesthood, and alleges that the Lord is present in the consecrated bread. The warnings which are found under grace against the keeping of the law are of necessity applicable only to the Decalogue, and not to the Ceremonial law.

The Ceremonial law governed the precise manner of the observance of the Sabbath and there is great unreasonableness, with attending confusion, when the attempt is now made to keep the Jewish Sabbath apart from the Ceremonial law. The class of legalists who now try to observe the seventh day, having no way to introduce the Ceremonial law, borrow the features of the new day of grace. They hold services, worship, and do much religious work on the seventh day, which, being strictly a day of rest, was never designed to be a day of activity, religious or otherwise, nor was such activity ever allowed on this day during the reign of the law.

- (b) There is even greater inconsistency in the position of those who recognize the first day of the week, but invest that day with the character of the Sabbath, and keep the day on the authority of

the law of Moses.

Not only has the whole Mosaic system ceased with its Sabbath and every requirement related to that day; but there could be no consistency in borrowing even one of the features of the Jewish Sabbath. This error of borrowing certain features of the Jewish Sabbath is committed by both of these classes of legalists.

The law of Moses was never subject to a partial observance.

It is a unit; for "**what thing's soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law;**" and, "**the man which doeth those things shall live by them;**" and again, "**cursed, is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of law to do them.**" There is no Scriptural warrant for a partial acceptance of the law, or a partial recognition of its Sabbath day. The observance of the day with all its requirements must be perfectly kept, or not at all.

The slightest recognition of the least of all the features of the Sabbath commits a person who attempts it to keep the whole law.

It therefore follows that the Christian who, while keeping the first day of the week, is influenced in the slightest degree by the law of Moses concerning a Sabbath day, is, both by Scripture and reason, committed to keep every feature of the Jewish Sabbath, as well as the whole Mosaic system.

For example, the person who adopts even one feature of Sabbath observance on the ground that it is enjoined by the law, is bound by that same Sabbath law to stone to death every person who fails to keep any feature of that law. In fact, if he himself had been so guilty as to observe the first day of the week in place of the seventh, he must bow to the death penalty, in vindication of the righteous judgments of GOD.

This death penalty is the uncompromising provision made in GOD's Word for Sabbath breakers.

The original heresy of the church was the attempted admixture of law and grace teachings. It is one of the most destructive heresies of the present hour, and at no point of contact do the opposing principles of law and grace become more clearly crystallized than in the question of the exact day which is to be observed. There is no "*Christian Sabbath*." The new day which belongs to grace is in no way related to the Sabbath. Observance must be either of one day or the other. To co-mingle them, as every legalist does, is to frustrate grace.

## *2. A new day is divinely appointed under grace.*

This new day is also a particular day of the week and has been given a name which is in accordance with its character. Its divine appointment is first recorded in a prophetic message: "**The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it**" (Psalm 118:22-24).

In this Scripture, both the death and the resurrection of CHRIST are in view. He was the rejected

Stone, and His Father, through the resurrection, has made Him the Head Stone of the Corner. The resurrection was appointed to take place on a certain day which the Lord had determined, and that day was by divine intention to be celebrated with joy and gladness.

The divine commentary on this passage is given through the Apostle Peter as recorded in Acts 4:10, 11: **"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."**

Therefore the day which the Lord had appointed when the rejected Stone would become the Head Stone of the Corner, is the day of His resurrection.

This is the **"day which the LORD hath made."** It is therefore the Lord's day.

In that day we are to **"rejoice and be glad."** This new day is the day to which the Apostle John made reference when he said, **"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"** (Revelation 1:10). These words of John were written fully sixty years after the death of CHRIST and at a time when the new day had become the accepted day among all believers.

The Lord's day should in no wise be confused with **"The Day of the LORD."**

- one is the first day of every week, which is observed as a commemoration of the resurrection of CHRIST.
- the other is a prophetic period, which is still future, and which concerns Israel and the whole creation.

The first Lord's day was the pattern of all the Lord's days that should follow. It began **"very early in the morning,"** when the risen Lord said, **"All Hail"** (lit. *rejoice*)! It continued with His precious fellowship, and closed with His benediction of peace. From that early morning to its close it was a day of worship, activity, and joy.

The Sabbath, on the other hand, with no less symbolical significance, began with the setting sun, which spoke of complete cessation of activity, and of perfect rest.

The Christian has an unchangeable day. He may extend its observance to all days, but He cannot change the one day, which is divinely appointed, any more than Israel, or anyone else, could change the divinely appointed seventh day. A change of the first day to another breaks the symbolic meaning of the day as it represents the true relationships under grace. It results in robbing CHRIST of that glory which is His alone.

This is one of the wrongs committed by all those who persist in an attempted seventh-day observance.

The two days do not present an optional choice to the Christian. The choice between these days is one which carries either acceptance or rejection of the most vital relationships between CHRIST and the believer under grace.



### *3. A new day is indicated by important events.*

Beginning with the resurrection, and following it, every event recorded in the New Testament which had important religious significance fell on the first day of the week, or the Lord's day. No greater emphasis through events could be given to this new day than that found in the teachings of grace, and, added to this, is the fact that in these same Scriptures the Sabbath day is wholly set aside.

If it be claimed that there is no direct commandment for the keeping of the Lord's day, it should be observed that there is explicit command against the observance of the Sabbath day, and that the lack of commandments concerning the Lord's day is both in accordance with the character of the new day, and the entire order of grace which it represents and to which it is related.

Mention should be made of the great events which fell on the first day of the week.

#### *a. On the first day of the week CHRIST arose from the dead.*

His resurrection is vitally related to the ages past, to the fulfillment of all prophecy, to the values of His death, to the Church, to Israel, to creation, to the purposes of GOD in grace which reach beyond to the ages to come, and to the eternal glory of GOD. Fulfillment of the eternal purposes related to all of these was dependent upon the coming forth of the Son of GOD from that tomb. He arose from the dead, and the greatness of that event is indicated by the importance of its place in Christian doctrine. Had not CHRIST arisen - He by whom all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, He for whom things were created, who is before all things, and by whom all things consist (hold together) - every divine purpose and blessing would have failed, yea, the very universe and the throne of GOD would have dissolved and would have been dismissed forever. All life, light, and hope would have ceased. Death, darkness, and despair would have reigned.

Though the spiritual powers of darkness might have continued, the last hope for a ruined world would have been banished eternally. It is impossible for the mind to grasp the mighty issues which were at stake at the moment when CHRIST came forth from the tomb.

At no moment of time, however, were these great issues in jeopardy. The consummation of His resurrection was sure, for omnipotent power was engaged to bring it to pass. Every feature of the Christian's salvation, position, and hope was dependent on the resurrection of his Lord. Very much depended on the death of CHRIST, but every value of that death would have been sacrificed apart from the resurrection. When CHRIST arose from the dead, Christianity was born, and the new creation was brought into existence. There is nothing in the old order for the believer. He stands on resurrection ground. He belongs only to the new creation.

GOD is faithful to all that He has wrought in CHRIST and He, according to His Word, will not suffer the child of the new creation to go back and celebrate the beginning of the old and fallen creation from which His child has been saved through infinite riches of grace. If the children of grace persist in relating themselves to the old creation by the observance of the Sabbath, it is evidence of their limitations in the knowledge of the Word and will of GOD; it is to fall from

grace.

Since the day of CHRIST's resurrection is the day in which the new creation was formed, and all that enters into the Christian's life and hope was brought into being, both according to Scripture and according to reason, the Christian can celebrate no other day than the Lord's day.

b. *On the first day of the week CHRIST met His disciples in the new power and fellowship of His resurrection life.*

c. *On the first day of the week CHRIST symbolized the new resurrection fellowship by breaking bread with His disciples.*

d. *On the first day of the week He gave them instructions in their new resurrection ministry and life for Him.*

e. *On the first day of the week He commanded the disciples to preach the new message to all the world.*

f. *On the first day of the week CHRIST ascended into Heaven as the "Wave Sheaf."*

In fulfilling the Old Testament type and the eternal purpose of GOD, it was necessary that He should appear in Heaven as the earnest of the mighty harvest of souls whom He had redeemed and who came out of that tomb with Him to share His eternal life and glory. So, also, He must, having accomplished the sacrifice for sin, present His Own blood in Heaven (Leviticus 16:1-34; Hebrews 9:16-28).

Having not yet ascended, He said to Mary, "**Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God**" (John 20:17).

How little the mighty import of this message from CHRIST was understood then, and how little it is understood even now!

That He ascended on that day is evident; for He said unto them at evening of that day, "**Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see**" (Luke 24:39). He had ascended to Heaven, accomplished His work there, and returned to earth to complete His post-resurrection ministry.

g. *On the first day of the week He breathed on His disciples and imparted the HOLY SPIRIT to them.*

h. *On the first day of the week the Spirit descended to take up His age-characterizing ministries in the world.*

i. *On the first day of the week the Apostle Paul preached to the assembled believers at Troas.*

The Spirit of GOD has distinctly emphasized the fact that the Apostle was in Troas seven days. Of necessity, then, the stay in that city included both a seventh day and a first day of the week. The Apostle was thus free to choose either day for his public ministry to the assembled saints. The record reads: "**We . . . came unto them to Troas . . . where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them**" (Acts 20:6,7).

j. *The Apostle commanded the Corinthian believer to "lay by him in store," on the first day of the week, "as God hath prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:2).*

k. *On the first day of the week CHRIST appeared to John on Patmos in that revelation of Himself in all His present resurrection, heavenly glory.*

He appeared to John on the Lord's day.

#### *4. The new day typifies the new creation.*

The rite of circumcision, being accomplished on the eighth day, was a suggestion of the spiritual circumcision of the flesh which CHRIST wrought by His death and resurrection. The eighth day was the first day following a completed week. It is thus a picture of that new order which came through the death and resurrection of CHRIST.

The Apostle writes:

**"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11).**

Not only has the old nature been judged in the crucifixion, death, and burial of the Son of GOD, and the new victory in the resurrection life of CHRIST been made possible; but, for the believer, the old creation went into that tomb and a new creation with its heavenly power and glory came out. The old creation was abolished and with it the Sabbath which commemorated it. Only a new standing in the resurrected CHRIST abides and this both demands and provides a new day. That new day is the eighth day, or the first day following the ending of the old creation.

#### *5. The new day is typical of unmerited grace.*

The first day of the week is a type of the facts and relationships which are under grace; while the seventh day is a type of the facts and relationships which are under the law.

On the seventh day man rested from all his work. This is in harmony with the law covenant of works, which required a man to do good in order that he might receive the blessing of GOD. Under the law, six days of faithful labor are followed by one day of absolute rest.

On the other hand, the observance of the first day of the week is typical of the believer's position under unmerited grace. He begins with a day of blessing before any works are wrought, and then he is expected to live the following six days in the power and blessing he has received on that day. This is the order of the grace covenant of faith in which all saving grace is first bestowed as a gift from GOD, and is then followed by a life which is lived in the power of that new relationship with GOD.

- a day of rest belonged to a people who were related to GOD by works which were to be accomplished.

- a day of ceaseless worship and service belongs to a people who are related to GOD by the finished work of CHRIST.

The seventh day was governed by an unyielding, ironclad law. The first day is characterized by the latitude and liberty belonging to grace.

The seventh day was observed with the hope that by it one might be accepted of GOD. The first day is observed with the assurance that one is already accepted of GOD.

The keeping of the seventh day was wrought by the flesh. The keeping of the first day is to be wrought by the indwelling Spirit.

6. *The new day began to be observed with the resurrection of CHRIST.*

It is claimed by a certain group of sabbatarians that the Sabbath was kept by the early church until the day was changed by the Emperor Constantine in the year 321 A. D., or even later by the Pope of Rome.

There is no ground for this erroneous and misleading teaching.

The Sabbath was never changed. It could not be. A new and far different day in significance, which alone could belong to this age of grace, superseded it. When this age is completed and law reigns again in the earth, the Sabbath will be observed; but in no wise will man have changed the day.

There is conclusive evidence that the first day of the week has been observed by the church from the very resurrection of CHRIST.

This evidence is found both

- (a) in the Scriptures and
- (b) in the writings of the early fathers:

(a) Turning to the Epistles of the New Testament, wherein is conditioned the believer's life under grace, we discover that there is prohibition against the observance of a Sabbath day, and that there is not one record that any Christian kept a Sabbath day, even in error. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence, as has been seen, that the first day of the week was observed in the manner consistent with its significance.

- (b) The testimony from the early fathers is also conclusive. \*

\* These quotations from the early fathers are taken from Bowman's *Historical Evidence of the New Testament*, Pgs. 130-135; *The Encyclopedia Britannica* under "Sunday;" and Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 1. Pg. 135.

*Eusebius, 315 A. D.*, says: "The churches throughout the rest of the world observe the practice that has prevailed from Apostolic tradition until the present time so that it would not be proper to terminate our fast on any other day but the resurrection day of our Saviour. Hence there were synods and convocations of our Bishops on this question and all unanimously drew up an

ecclesiastical decree which they communicated to churches in all places that the mystery of the Lord's resurrection should be celebrated on no other than the Lord's Day."

*Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, 300 A. D.*, says: "We keep the Lord's Day as a day of joy because of him who rose thereon."

*Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, 253 A. D.*, says: "The Lord's Day is both the 1st, and the 8th day."

*Tertullian, of Carthage, 200 A. D.*, says, speaking of the "sun-worshippers": "Though we share with them Sunday, we are not apprehensive lest we seem to be heathen."

*Clement of Alexandria, 194 A. D.*, says: "The old Sabbath day has become nothing more than a working day."

*Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, 178 A. D.*, says: "The mystery of the Lord's resurrection may not be celebrated on any other day than the Lord's Day."

*Bardesanes, 160 A. D.*, says: "Wherever we be, all of us are called by the one name of the Messiah, namely Christians, and upon one day, which is the first day of the week, we assemble ourselves together and on the appointed days we abstain from food."

*Justin Martyr, 135 A. D.*, says:

"Sunday is the day upon which we all hold our communion assembly, because it is the first day on which GOD having wrought a change in the darkness and matter made the world and JESUS CHRIST our Saviour, on that day, rose from the dead and on the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place and the memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits."

"On the Lord's Day all Christians in the city or country meet together because that is the day of our Lord's resurrection; and then we read the apostles and prophets. This being done, the president makes an oration to the assembly exhorting them to imitate and to practice the things which they have heard, and then we all join in prayer, and after that we celebrate the Lord's Supper."

*Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, 110 A. D.*, says: "If then those who walked in the ancient practices attain unto newness of hope no longer observing Sabbaths, but fashioning their lives after the Lord's Day, on which our life also arose through him, that we may be found disciples of JESUS CHRIST, our only teacher."

*Barnabas, one of the Apostolic fathers, writing 70 A. D.*, says: "Finally He saith, 'Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me. I shall make a new beginning of the eighth day, that is the beginning of another world,' wherefore also we keep the Lord's Day with joyfulness, the day also on which JESUS rose from the dead."

Also, the "*Didache of the Apostles*" 70 A. D., says: "On the Lord's own Day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks."

By this line of unbroken testimony the evidence concerning the observance of the Lord's day is carried back to the days of the writings of the New Testament.

It is quite true that Emperors and Popes have made decrees regarding the first day of the week. Everything was done that could be done to persecute the Jew, and to abolish Jewish practices; but the Jewish Sabbath passed, and the new day came to be, not by the decree of man, but by the resurrection of CHRIST which brought in all that the Lord's day signifies.

#### *7. The new day has been blessed of GOD.*

Christians have observed the Lord's day under the evident blessing of GOD for nearly 2000 years. Among them have been the most devout believers, the martyrs, the missionaries, and a countless throng of those who would have passed through any trial or persecution to know and do the will of GOD.

It is a very serious charge to say that all these faithful saints have been disobedient, or as some sabbatarians now call all Christians who do not keep Sabbath, "heretics," "deceivers," "having the mark of the Beast," and "blinded by Satan."

The Gospel of grace is by these people substituted by "**another gospel**" which is to the effect that only those who keep the Sabbath will be saved, and they also teach that GOD has "forsaken His church" and that she is "abandoned to Satan who rules her." In spite of the fact that GOD has never once imposed the Sabbath upon the age of grace, they make the preaching of the Sabbath their major theme, and in seeming bitterness, do not hesitate to hinder the good works of all who love and keep the Lord's day.

Along with the error of preaching the law in place of the Gospel, these sabbatarians hold and teach other misleading heresies and unbiblical doctrines. Being so much in error concerning many fundamental doctrines of the Bible, it is not strange that they persist in Sabbath legality.

The reasons for keeping the Lord's day, or the first day of the week, are clear and sufficient to those who will receive the teachings of GOD's Word without prejudice.

#### *Second. The Biblical Observance of the Lord's Day.*

The manner in which the first day of the week should be observed is clearly indicated by the very name which is given to it in the Scriptures.

Being the Lord's day, it is to be lived in that manner which will most honor and glorify the Lord. Whatever enters into the present relationship between the believer and his Lord, such as prayer, joyful worship, and service, will naturally characterize the observance of the day. Particular care should be exercised that no element of a Jewish Sabbath be incorporated into the manner of the keeping of the Lord's day. Not only does such an intrusion create confusion in the mind as to the meaning and purpose of the day, but it is a co-mingling of the elements of law and grace, and this, it is certain, is not according to the mind of GOD.

The two days are similar only in one respect: they both sustain the ratio of one particular day in

seven. There is not the slightest reason for any combination of their respective features. Should this exhortation to watchfulness lest these days be confused seem to be extreme, it should be remembered that only thus can a believer stand fast in the liberty wherewith CHRIST has made him free, and not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage. Only thus can he be saved from violating the most precious aspect of his own relation to GOD under grace, and from disregarding the most vital injunctions of those Scriptures which condition his life under grace.

Christians have been saved from the curse of the law by the death of CHRIST (Galatians 3:13).

This marvelous deliverance has cost the sacrifice of the Son of GOD, and it cannot be an unimportant issue in the mind of GOD. The believer who would really keep the day in conformity to the revealed will of his Lord, should duly consider the fact that every aspect of Sabbath observance is purely legal, and related only to law, and that CHRIST has died to save him from any complicity with the law. The observance of the Lord's day as recorded in the New Testament, is free from every relationship to the Jewish Sabbath.

When contemplating the Scriptural observance of the Lord's day, three considerations arise:

- (1) It belongs to a particular people;
- (2) it is not subject to rules; and
- (3) its observance is not limited to one day.

*1. The Lord's day belongs to a particular people.*

As the Sabbath under the law belonged only to the nation Israel, so, in like manner, the new day in grace belongs only to those who are regenerated by the Spirit.

In arriving at the full force of this statement, it should be noted:

*a. The Lord's day, like every other aspect of grace, is an appeal to the individual believer only.*

As men are now saved by a personal faith, and afterwards their service is in the power of an individual gift by the Spirit, they walk alone in the Spirit, and they receive their own reward for faithfulness to GOD.

In conformity with this truth, therefore, the observance of the day is to be personal. The exact manner of its observance is a matter between the individual believer and his Lord. The Scriptures presuppose that the believer is a normal Christian to the extent that he is yielded to GOD and walking in the Spirit, that it will be his delight to do the will of GOD, and to rejoice above all else in the larger freedom which the Lord's day affords for worship and service. If perchance he is not thus yielded to GOD, no forced, outward observance of the day will correct his carnal heart, nor would such an observance of a day be pleasing to GOD.

No day has been committed to the Church as a body. Apart from the two exceptions that the believer is to consider his possible influence upon a weaker brother, and his own conduct in the light of expediency, the day is to be observed by the individual out of the fullness of his own heart. Beyond this there are no rules, nor could there be; for apart from this there is no possibility of continuing in those exact relationships which belong to grace. Concerning the observance of

the Lord's day the Apostle said:

**"Let every man [Christian] be fully persuaded in his own mind"** (Romans 14:5).

*b. The Lord's day is not for the unregenerate.*

The unsaved sustain no relation to the Lord's day, since that day belongs only to the new creation, and therefore the pressing of the observance of a religious day upon the individual who is unsaved, is misleading in the extreme; for it tends to the utter confusion of the Gospel of grace.

GOD is not calling on the unsaved to keep a day to which they could in no way be related. The issue between GOD and the sinner is the one issue which the new Gospel of grace has raised and imposed. It is a question as to whether he will believe on the Lord JESUS CHRIST unto forgiveness and eternal life. The person who observes a day while rejecting CHRIST as Saviour, is no nearer salvation or acceptance with GOD than he would otherwise be. That supposed merit, gained by keeping a day, may be the one thing that hinders him from discovering CHRIST as the Saviour for a meritless sinner.

Men are not saved by any works whatsoever, and any teaching which misdirects them at this point is **"another gospel"** and subject to the anathema of GOD (Galatians 1:8).

If the motive in pressing the religious observance of a day upon the unregenerate be for the moral and civic good of the community, the question should be answered as to whether the moral and civic betterment of the world is more important than the salvation of men.

*c. The Lord's day is not a national day.*

When a day is imposed upon the nation it is, without exception, upon the authority of the Jewish Sabbath of rest, and not on the authority of anything which obtains in the new creation. The error of this legalism needs no further exposition. GOD is certainly not imposing a legal Sabbath on any nation, or the world, when He has given His Son to remove that whole law-curse and to place men where they might be saved apart from works of their own.

In this age GOD is represented as dealing with the individual only.

In matters of human government, it is the **"times of the Gentiles,"** with all that is involved, and no individual or nation is now accepted of GOD on the basis of human works.

It is most imperative that a day of rest for man and beast be maintained by civic authority. No intelligent person could vote otherwise; but the day should be enforced as all other humanitarian laws and other portions of the Decalogue are enforced, and not as a meritorious religious observance.

At any cost the Sabbath-observance stumbling-stone should be kept from the path of the unsaved.



d. *The Lord's day and the children.*

The question often arises in the Christian home as to the manner in which the Lord's day should be observed by children. Upon this subject a suggestion may be advanced; Until he is of age, the child is properly under the direction of the parents and the government of the home. He should live in conformity to the wishes and customs of the parents, but it is vitally important that the child should be brought to know CHRIST as a Saviour at the earliest possible moment. Then the Lord's day becomes to him a matter of his own privilege and personal delight, and not a law prescribed by the parents. Care should be taken, as well, that the day of grace should not become a subject of dislike and prejudice in the mind of the child.

2. *The Lord's day is not subject to rules.*

Such is the character of all the teachings of grace, and at this point the grace teachings are wholly in contrast to the teachings of all law.

The law contemplated the people to whom it was addressed as being children and thus subject to "**tutors and governors.**" Every detail of their prescribed life was a matter of explicit law. The flesh was in no way depended upon to direct itself.

The believer under grace is an adult son in the Father's house, with the wider latitude which belongs to the full-grown, self-responsible man. Therefore the teachings of grace are not explicit as to detail. They anticipate the immediate inner judgment by the indwelling Spirit. Under grace, great principles are announced, but the outworking of those principles is to be according to the leading of the Spirit in the individual. Liberality is enjoined, but the object and amount of the gift is a matter of prayerful dependence on the Spirit.

As to service, every Christian is to be instant in season and out of season, but the gifts for service and the manner and place of their exercise is "**as he will.**" Prayer is to be offered without ceasing, but we know not what to pray for as we ought. However in this again, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities and He maketh intercession for us according to the mind of GOD.

The believer's life under grace is a "**walk in the Spirit.**"

Step by step, every detail is to be wrought in the heart by the Spirit, and there are no more detail rules for the observance of the Lord's day than for the outworking of any other responsibility or privilege under grace. The flesh is not now to be controlled by laws; but by the Lordship of the Spirit. Not having specific rules for the keeping of the Christian's day, and not duly considering the divine provision for a spiritual life in the power of the Spirit, men, hoping to keep control of the flesh, have turned to the Jewish Sabbath laws and forced them onto the Lord's day.

In so doing, they have repudiated one of the most vital accomplishments of the death of CHRIST, they have robbed believers of their liberty in grace, and, so far as their influence goes, they have degraded the full-grown sons of GOD to the level of mere children who are under "**tutors and governors.**"

The real question is not, How shall we preserve the sacredness of the day unless we have laws

and enforce them?

It is rather, can the believer, to whom the day belongs, be trusted, when filled with the Spirit, to glorify GOD on the Lord's day?

Evidently there will be no failure to observe the day on the part of the Spirit-filled believer. But what of the great company of carnal Christians? Should they not be held by laws to the keeping of the day? In reply to this important question it should be stated: The position of a carnal Christian is different from that of the unsaved. The Lord's day belongs to the Christian, but it does not belong to the unregenerate.

The Christian alone faces the problem related to the Lord's day. The problem, therefore, resolves itself into this: Is GOD satisfied when the Christian's life is merely a forced, outward conformity to unpleasant ideals? The answer is obvious. One of the essential glories of grace is that God-honoring manner of life which is an outflow and overflow of the heart.

No painful observance of law will ever correct a carnal heart. The cure is found only in the right adjustment of the heart to the Spirit.

Too often the Christian life is presented as being a matter of observing certain rules and sustaining a superficial outward conduct, to the neglect of the divinely provided, victorious, overflowing life in the Spirit. Notwithstanding the consternation of the untaught legalist who proposes to regulate Christian conduct by precept, the truth stands that the Lord's day imposes no rules, and yields to no law. True to grace, there are, however, certain well-defined principles to be stated:

a. *It, being the Lord's day, is to be lived well-pleasing to Him.*

This principle is the embodiment of all other principles related to the keeping of the Lord's day; but the detail of this Heaven-high ideal, as has been seen, cannot be determined by rules, nor can it ever be wrought by the flesh.

There is but one exception:

It has pleased the Lord to give minute instruction as to the manner of the observance of His memorial supper.

b. *The Lord's day celebrates the resurrection of CHRIST.*

If this be true, then all obligation to observe the day of rest, which is related to the old creation, is excluded. The day is to be celebrated in the new life and service of the resurrected CHRIST.

c. *The Lord's day yields to no law.*

Like all law, the law of a certain day has been kept and fulfilled for the believer by CHRIST. There remains for the believer only overflowing praise and joyful service. The element of necessity has likewise passed. Men are not compelled to keep a day to be accepted of GOD.

They, if saved, are already accepted "**in the beloved.**" The day should be kept because of perfection in CHRIST, and not unto perfection in CHRIST.

d. *It is a day of personal delight.*

When the Lord's day becomes a burden to the individual, to him it is no longer a day of grace. It is characterized by that attitude of heart which delights to do the will of GOD. When this day was prophetically announced, it was said: "**This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.**"

So, also, the first word from the lips of the resurrected CHRIST on the morning of His resurrection was, "**All hail!**" (The word here is *chairo*, and means *rejoice*, or, *O joy!*).

The Lord's day should be celebrated in the fullest experience of the "**joy of the Lord.**"

e. *The Lord's day is a day for the largest Christian activity.*

The risen Lord revealed the character of the day on that same early morning when He said: "**Go tell.**"

This is the obligation toward the new evangel, the giving of which is to occupy every believer.

As the Old Testament priests went in to perform a sacrifice, the New Testament priests,- all believers under grace, are to go out to the ends of the earth to tell of the sacrifice which has been performed.

The Lord's day is not a day for selfish entertainment or amusement. It is not a day for idleness and rest. Its privileges should be, and will be, preserved by all who delight to do His will. It becomes an opportunity for many who are held by secular work during the days of the week, to offer the fuller service of prayer, worship, and testimony which belongs to their Lord.

The instructed Christian no longer labors to be accepted of GOD, which was the obligation under the law; but he, being accepted in grace, labors to glorify his Lord who saves him. He has ceased from his own works, and though ceaselessly active, is working in the power and energy of the Spirit. His activity is not limited to one day, or to six days: it is "**in season and out of season**" according to the mind and will of the Spirit. Spirit-filled believers have always violated every feature of a strict Jewish Sabbath of rest when serving as "**able ministers of the new covenant.**"

If led of the Spirit thus to serve, the resulting violation of the Sabbath is in reality the work of the Spirit.

It would be a Herculean task, indeed, to attempt to prove that all Christian service and activity exercised on the first day of the week for nineteen centuries has been offensive to GOD because it violated the demands of a Sabbath of rest, or that the neglect of the seventh day by all the believers of the Christian era, has, in the mind of GOD, merited the penalty of death. Yet this is the logical charge to be made against all these believers unless it be admitted that they had individually entered, as a prerequisite to service, into the Sabbath rest of that which is finished

forever in the Cross.

*f. The Lord's day observance is to be governed by the law of expediency, and the law of love.*

The law of expediency permits the undertaking on the Lord's day of only those things which are advisable, advantageous, and suitable. Judgment in these things should be formed only in view of the Biblical teachings concerning the Lord's day responsibility, not the Jewish Sabbath,- and in view of the need of others, and the possible influence which any particular action might have upon others. The Christian objective is not a slavish conformity to certain laws governing a day. It is concerned rather with the question as to what will most glorify CHRIST and advance the cause of His saving grace in the earth.

When adjusted to the law of love, the Christian will not exercise his own liberty in such a manner as to hinder and offend a weaker brother who through false teaching has developed a conscience toward a Jewish Sabbath, nor will he rob others of the exercise of their own worship and service. Such issues have to be given due consideration when dealing with all questions of travel and of relationship to those who serve.

*3. The manner of the observance of the Lord's day may be extended to all days.*

The Lord's day observance alone is capable of being extended to all days; for in no wise could a Jewish Sabbath be thus extended.

It is evident, therefore, that the Apostle's reference to the keeping of a day, as found in Romans 14:1-12, is a reference to the Lord's day and not to a Sabbath day. He writes: **"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. 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 doth not regard it . . . For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ . . . So then everyone of us shall give an account of himself to God."**

The primary teaching of this passage puts the emphasis on the fact that Christian conduct is largely a matter to be settled between the believer and his Lord. There need be no fear; **"God is able to make him stand."** The passage might be understood as presenting a contrast between a man who keeps one day, and a man who keeps no day at all. In such a case, GOD will deal with the wrong in His child, if wrong there be. In attempting to adjust such a situation, men might compel the erring one to observe a day, or, as a penalty for failure, exclude him from their fellowship.

The divine method is to change the heart. This GOD alone can do.

But in this particular instance it will be observed that concerning the man of whom it is said that he does not regard the day, it is also said that **"unto the Lord he doth not regard it."** It is as much a matter of devotion to GOD in the case of the one man as it is in the case of the other.

It is therefore probable that the contrast is between the man who keeps one day as unto the Lord,

and another man who keeps all days as unto the Lord.

There must be sufficient room in the Christian fellowship for these two equally sincere men to live in joyful companionship in CHRIST. It would be quite human for each of these men to form mutually exclusive denominations for the conservation of his own peculiar convictions. This, however, would not be in harmony with the life under grace. The man who esteems all days alike, extends the joyous worship, praise, and service belonging to the Lord's day' into every day.

This leads to the consideration of the fact that there is

- (a) a true Sabbath under grace, and
- (b) there is yet to be a millennial Sabbath in the earth.

a. *The true Sabbath under grace.*

- the Sabbath under the law was a day.
- the Sabbath under grace is a life.

The law, even of the Sabbath, was but "**a shadow of good things to come**," but CHRIST is now the Substance. The Sabbath under grace knows no shadow. It is radiant with the glory of the resurrected CHRIST.

In Hebrews 4:1-16 there is full revelation concerning the Sabbath under grace.

This whole message is gathered up in one brief portion of the passage:

**"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his"** (vs. 9, 10).

There is no reference in this Scripture to the rest into which the Christian enters at death. It is rather, "**For we which have believed do enter into rest**" (v. 3). It is the rest of "**him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly**" (Romans 4:5), and the rest of the one who, "**walking in the Spirit**," discovers that he does not fulfill the lust of the flesh, and who enters into the realization of the provision through the indwelling Spirit that the whole will of GOD is to be fulfilled in him, rather than by him.

This great blessing is not restricted to a Sabbath day; it is an unbroken Sabbath life.

The Sabbath of the law was, then, a day of absolute rest; the Sabbath under grace is a life which is delivered from all works of the flesh since CHRIST has wrought, and is free from every dependence on the flesh since the Spirit has been given.

No burden was allowed to be borne on the Sabbath under the law; every burden is to be cast on the Lord in the Sabbath of grace.

The Sabbath of the law was a day of rest for self; the Sabbath of grace is a rest from self. It is a

life which is to be lived to the glory and praise of Another.

In the Sabbath under the law, man was to cease from doing his own will for one day in seven; in the Sabbath under grace the believer is to be constantly and wholly yielded to GOD. \*

\* There is significance in the fact that the Greek word for week is *sabbaton*, which also means Sabbath. Thus in Matthew 28:1, referring to the day of CHRIST's resurrection, we have the possible literal reading: "**At the end of the sabbath as it began to dawn on the first day of sabbaths**" (Cf Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 13:14; 16:13).

At least three expositions of this passage are possible.

1. That there is no significance in the fact that the resurrection day is called Sabbath since it is the same Greek word for week. This is evidently the position taken by translators generally. The one passage, "**I fast twice in the week**" (Luke 18:12) would be difficult under a Sabbath interpretation unless it be taken to mean, "**I fast twice on the sabbath.**"

2. That the use of the word *sabbaton* in connection with the day of resurrection warrants the use of the phrase, Christian Sabbath, but the strong objection to this usage is the absolute prohibition in the Epistles against the Sabbath day under any form whatsoever.

3. That the resurrection morning was the first day of all the days which were to enter into the age of grace, and that age, so far as a Sabbath is concerned, is a period in which the believer has entered into rest. Under this interpretation, the resurrection day was the first day of Sabbaths, which series was to include every succeeding day until the Lord returns.

Every vestige of the system which provided for the giving of one-seventh of the time in conformity to the will of GOD, is removed, and in its place the everyday, unchanging experience of that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of GOD has been substituted. It is inconceivable that CHRIST was more devoted to His Father on one day than on another. To intrude the legal Sabbath into the present order of fellowship with GOD, is to rob Him of six-sevenths of His glory in grace.

It is true that the Christian has a day which is given to him from GOD, and this day is to be observed; but its observance is never a matter of greater piety, devotion, or yieldedness to GOD than of any other day. Its observance consists in a larger freedom, because of the cessation of temporal cares, to do all that his heart is yearning to do all the days.

The Sabbath in grace is, therefore, an experience of all that enters into the highest ideals of the Christian's life and devotion to GOD.

Blessed indeed are the children of GOD who learn to turn from holy days, from lenten seasons, and from all mere forms, if these even suggest the thought of fitfulness in fellowship and service with CHRIST. Doubtless, in spite of the glory of the true Sabbath under grace, there will always be those who will continue to give their tenth, in place of giving themselves and all that they are and have, and who will give a mere fraction of their time for devotion to GOD, rather than their

lives.

The true Sabbath under grace is well stated in these words:

- **"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"** (I Corinthians 10:31);
- **"Be instant in season, out of season"** (II Timothy 4:2);
- **"Pray without ceasing"** (I Thessalonians 5:17);
- **"Giving thanks always for all things"** (Ephesians 5:20);
- **"Rejoice evermore"** (I Thessalonians 5:16); and,
- **"Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"** (I Corinthians 15:58).

b. *The millennial Sabbath.*

The Sabbath, as a type, will have its final earthly fulfillment in the coming kingdom-reign of CHRIST.

It seems probable that it will be at the end of its six thousand years of labor and oppression under the power of sin and Satan, that the earth will celebrate its predicted thousand-year, jubilee Sabbath of rest. During that period the Church will be reigning with the King as His Bride, and Israel will again keep her seventh-day Sabbath, but in the new enabling power which is to be provided in that age of the divine glory in the earth.

Of that kingdom-age it is written:

**"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, saith the LORD"** (Isaiah 66:23).

### III. CERTAIN CURRENT ERRORS

A brief recapitulation of what has already been covered of the current errors on the Sabbath question is here given in conclusion of this aspect of the teachings of grace.

First. *That the Sabbath Obtains from Creation to the End of Time.*

There is no Scripture upon which this claim may be based, either for the period from Adam to the giving of the law, or from the death of CHRIST until the end of the present age of grace.

Second. *That the Sabbath was Ever Given to Gentiles.*

The disastrous results of the prevalent custom of borrowing certain features from Judaism, including its Sabbath, and intruding them into Christianity cannot be too strongly emphasized. This error carries with it the obligation to keep the law in its totality, disregards one of the most vital accomplishments of CHRIST in His death, and creates a condition of hopeless confusion in all matters related to the right divisions of the Scriptures.

The whole seventh-day error is a logical outcome of an assumed freedom to apply Jewish Scriptures to the Church of GOD.

Third. *That the Decalogue was Never a part of the Law, and Therefore the Sabbath of the Decalogue is Now Binding Though the Law is Done Away.*

This claim is silenced by the :Scriptures. The Decalogue is included, incorporated, and embedded in the Old Testament statement of the law; and in the New Testament, the Decalogue is explicitly declared to be "**THE LAW**" (Romans 7:7).

Fourth. *That the Jewish Sabbath was Changed to the Lord's Day.*

Emperors, Popes, church councils, and creeds have declared the obligation to observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath. Such decrees have never changed the Sabbath to the Lord's day. The Sabbath could not be changed. An entirely different day has been established by GOD Himself. This new day belongs to the transcendent realities of the new creation which was brought into existence through the resurrection of CHRIST. The Lord's day is different from the Sabbath in every consideration but one, namely, like the Jewish Sabbath, it is a reservation of one particular day in seven.

Fifth. *That the Lord's Day Should be Called the Christian Sabbath.*

The practice of speaking of the Lord's day as the Christian Sabbath is wholly without Scriptural warrant, and is no doubt more often the result of careless habit, or lack of due consideration of the Bible teachings, than of unbelief.

Sixth. *The Practice of Adopting Rules from the Jewish Sabbath Law to Supplement the Precious Absence of Rules for the Lord's Day.*

This blasting error should be judged without mercy, for it, in effect, drives every grace-aspect of the Lord's day from the field, and induces one "**to tempt God**" (cf Acts 15:10). The toleration of this error not only reveals a total misconception of the glories of grace, but it darkens counsel, and complicates the saving Gospel of CHRIST.

Seventh. *That the Universal Observance of a Sabbath, or Lord's Day, Should be Required by Legislation of a Town, a State, or a Nation.*

This teaching, likewise, is foreign to Scripture. Let those who are pursuing this idea pause to consider whether their energy might not be employed in a manner which is more pleasing to CHRIST by heeding His last command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, rather than to attempt to compel unwilling, Christ-rejecting hearts into a mere religious formality which only develops self-righteous Pharisees who are as surely doomed without CHRIST as though they had never heard of a holy day.

~ end of section 6 ~



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