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THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

By

D. Shelby Corlett, D.D.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

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The Christian Sabbath

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A B C's of Holiness
The Baptism With the Holy Spirit
Symbols of Pentecost
The Meaning of Christian Security

Printed in U.S. A.

1939

NAZARENE PUBLISHING HOUSE
2923 Troost Ave., Kansas City, Mo.

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CHAPTER I THE MEANING OF SABBATH

What is the true Sabbath? Due to the agitation of Sabbatarians and the confusion among Christians resulting from their teachings more inquiries are made concerning the Sabbath question than perhaps any other modern fallacy. Conscientious Christians desire to obey God and keep His commandments regardless of the personal cost to them. Since Sabbatarians make the observing of Sunday as a day of worship a sign of apostasy and the mark of the beast, confusion prevails among those who have been touched by these teachings. The questions summarized are: Is the seventh day of the Fourth Commandment the same as the seventh day of the week of our Gregorian calendar? Are Christians bound to keep the seventh day of the week, our present Saturday, as the Sabbath? In this booklet we will present as clearly as possible answers to these questions, also we will give reasons for Christians observing what is commonly called the first day of the week, or Sunday, as a day of worship.

Different meanings are given to the word "sabbath" in Scripture. Its primary meaning everywhere is "cessation," "to cease to do," or "rest"; also it may mean a division of days. In Scripture the Sabbath is closely connected with the word "seven" or "seventh": the seventh day (Exodus 20:10), or weekly Sabbath, a day of rest; the Sabbatical year, "the seventh year shall be a sabbath" (Lev. 25:4); also "the space of seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years . . . And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year" (Lev. 25:8-11). Special feast days not occurring on or near the weekly Sabbath were called Sabbath days, such as the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27-32). Primarily the word "sabbath" stresses what the day, year, or period was meant to be, namely a day or period of rest, a sacred time, and not necessarily the particular number of a day in the week.

Early in the history of the world the seventh day (it is noteworthy that the word Sabbath does not appear in this connection) is sanctified by God and called a holy or sacred day: "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because in it he had rested from all his works which God created and made" (Gen. 2:3). In this statement a universal principle is stated, namely, the necessity of a seventh day of rest after a period of six days' of labor and the day is made sacred by God's blessing upon it. This principle is inherent in the nature of man and the universe, hence we have emphasized in Scripture, the day of rest for man and beast on each seventh day after six days of labor, a year of rest for the land after six years of productivity, and the suggestion of a final millennium of Sabbath rest for the whole universe, when everything within the universe is brought into harmony with God and His will.

The Decalogue reiterates this fundamental principle by the statement of the Fourth Commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:8-11). The principle of the commandment is based upon the Sabbath of creation, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, . . . and rested on the seventh: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed

it." Note particularly in this connection that the Sabbath is not stated as being a memorial of a finished creation, it is the reiteration of a fundamental principle revealed at creation; a sacred day of rest following six days of labor.

The Ten Commandments are ten moral principles. They reveal the true fundamentals of social or human life, stressing man's obligation to God and to his fellow beings. These Commandments are true, fundamentally so, and would be true were they not revealed; but being true, God in His infinite goodness has revealed them to us. These moral principles necessarily are binding upon all men without regard to their moral or spiritual state. The Sabbath, a sacred day of rest after six days of labor is as much a moral principle as any of the other Commandments. "The sabbath is made for man," said Jesus. Its requirement is based upon a distinct human need. The rest of the seventh day restores the depleted supply of physical energy consumed during the six working days, the worship on this sacred day gives mental stimulation and spiritual blessing, and man is further rewarded through his recognition of God as a Divine Ruler and by obedience to God's law.

Does this Sabbath principle, the seventh day, mean a specific day in the week of seven days, or does it mean the seventh day after six days of labor? In other words, did God bless a specific day of the week, for example a seventh day, called Saturday, and make it a holy day, or did He bless the seventh day, any day of the week, after six days of labor? "The essence of Sabbath law" says Benjamin Field, in his "Handbook of Christian Theology," "is that one day in seven, the seventh day after six days of labor should be appropriated to sacred uses. Accordingly we find that, in the original institution (Gen. 2:3) it is stated in general terms that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, which must, undoubtedly, imply the sanctity of every seventh day, at whatever given time the cycle may commence. In the Decalogue it is also mentioned in the same indefinite manner with respect to time. Nothing more being expressly required than to observe a day of sacred rest after six days of toil. The seventh day is to be kept holy, but not a word is said as to what epoch the commencement of the series is to be referred. It is the seventh day in reference to the six before mentioned."

The earliest references to the Sabbath in Scripture establish it as a fundamental principle, an inherent part of the moral law. For man's benefit and to honor God the principle of a sacred day of rest following six days of labor is given. Nothing more than this is stated or implied and no one has a right to go beyond that which is written.

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CHAPTER II

THE JEWISH SABBATH, A MEMORIAL

The Sabbath principle, namely a sacred day of rest following six days of toil, is revealed by God through scriptural statements made early in human history (Gen. 2:3), and confirmed in the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue. This principle was emphasized in the previous chapter. In this chapter we shall note how this Sabbath principle was adapted to Israel in the nature of a memorial. The Sabbath principle is fundamental and universal, but the adaptation of this principle to Israel as a memorial in the Jewish Sabbath is not possible of universal application.

The Sabbath principle as emphasized in God's statements following creation and in the Fourth Commandment is, a sacred day of rest following six days of toil. Man is as much obligated to engage in the days of toil as he is to observe the day of rest. "They are told," says Matthew Henry, "what is the day they must observe -- a seventh, after six days' labor; whether this was the seventh by computation from the first seventh, or from the day of their coming out of Egypt, or both, is not certain" in the statement of this Commandment.

However the given time in which Israel's Sabbath commenced and its related purpose to Israel is suggested in God's Word. The beginning of Israel's religious year is stated (Exodus 12:1, 2; 13:3, 4). The Sabbaths of that month (Abib) are mentioned, namely the fifteenth and twenty-second days. And the first observation of that day, the seventh day, seems to be indicated (Exodus 16:10-31). The giving of the manna is evidently the beginning of a cycle of weeks to Israel, and it corresponds to the other requirements given by God for their Sabbath keeping. The detailed instruction given by Moses in connection with the gathering of the manna, the apparent ignorance of the people and the confusion indicated by the number of Israelites who went out to gather manna on the seventh day, is evidence that these Hebrew slaves had not known or kept a Sabbath during their days in Egypt. So here the Sabbath principle of a sacred day of rest after six days of labor definitely becomes part of Israel's life and the given time in which the seventh day cycle commenced is stated.

But the Sabbath was to Israel more than a day of rest following six days of labor; it was a memorial day. It is not primarily a memorial of the finished work of creation as is generally supposed, for in no place is the Sabbath mentioned as a memorial of that creation rest day, although the principle of the Sabbath as revealed by that creation rest day is mentioned in connection with the Sabbath Commandment.

What, then, is the significance of the Jewish Sabbath as a memorial? It is threefold. First, it was a memorial of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt; "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out. . . . Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deut. 5:12-15). Second, it signified Israel's sacred relation to God and His rulership over them: "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 . . .

whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 31:13-15). Third, it was a sign of a perpetual covenant with Israel: "Israel shall keep the sabbath, throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever" (Exodus 31:16,17).

All of the detailed and ceremonial laws given to Israel, such as the requirement to make no fire on the Sabbath, and the feasts connected with certain Sabbaths, were related definitely to Israel's seventh day memorial Sabbath. These laws were not in any way related to the Sabbath principle, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, although the principle of a day of rest -- a day in which no servile work was to be done -- ran through the entire requirement of Israel's Sabbath observation. The principle of the Sabbath, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, is universal; but the Sabbath as a memorial to Israel, the seventh day of Israel's week, the cycle of which began with their deliverance from Egypt, specifically with the giving of the manna, was not universal. It was definitely related to Israel alone and not to other peoples or nations, for God positively stated the Israel memorial Sabbath "is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever." In fact it is impossible to keep the detailed laws of Israel's memorial Sabbath except in restricted areas of the earth. For example, folks in polar regions or in winter of the temperate zones must make fire on the Sabbath, and the making of a fire is strictly forbidden on Israel's memorial Sabbath.

A new cycle for reckoning the seventh day time may be instituted with an altogether different memorial without violating the Sabbath principle stated at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, (which was a sacred day of rest following six days of toil). The institution of this new cycle with a different memorial does no more violence to the Sabbath principle, than did the institution of Israel's cycle of time reckoned upon their deliverance from Egypt.

The Bible teaching on the Sabbath is twofold; first, a Sabbath principle stated by God at the close of creation, when He rested and blessed the seventh day, and this principle is reiterated and confirmed by God in the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue. This principle is a sacred day of rest following six days of toil. The second teaching is Israel's memorial Sabbath which is definitely related to the nation of Israel alone. It fell on the seventh day of Israel's week and had specific laws and ceremonies connected with it which could not fit into any universal observation of that special memorial Sabbath day. The principle of the Sabbath is universal and it is the moral obligation of all men, but Israel's memorial Sabbath was binding upon only that nation.

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CHAPTER III

THE JEWISH SABBATH CHANGED ANNUALLY

Previously we have noted the twofold teaching of the Bible relative to the Sabbath; first as a universal principle stated by God at creation and confirmed in the Fourth Commandment, and second as a specific memorial day to the nation of Israel. The question under consideration in this chapter is the Jewish memorial Sabbath, was it on a fixed day of the week, or was it observed on a fixed date in the year necessitating a change in the memorial day each year?

From Scripture we gather that the Israelites had two years; a civil year which began about the time of our month of September, and a religious year beginning about the time of the latter part of our month of March. Their Sabbaths, the weekly memorial day, were dated from the first of the religious year (Lev. 23:4-6).

The first Sabbath mentioned in connection with Israel's second year began on the evening of the 14th of the month of Abib and concluded on the 15th (Lev. 23:6), and this feast of Passover, or of unleavened bread, continued seven full days, until the evening of the 21st (Exodus 12:18), concluding on the 22nd; for "from even unto even, shall you celebrate your sabbath" (Lev. 23:32) said God to Israel. Thus two Sabbath dates -- the 15th and 22nd -- are established in the month of Abib, the first month of their religious year. Since the Sabbath principle was, six days of labor before a seventh day of rest or Sabbath, it follows necessarily that Sabbaths also fell on the first and eighth days of the month. This month Abib was the beginning of months (Exodus 13:3, 4), therefore the first week of Israel's first month began on a Sabbath; also in each year, without exception, the first day of the month Abib must be a Sabbath. Thus by Scripture we have located the Sabbaths in the first month of Israel's religious year as being fixed dates in the month rather than being on a fixed day of the week.

In the light of that fact we ask; was this first Sabbath the seventh day of the last week of the old year, or was it the first day of the first week of the new year? By this Jewish Sabbath the sabbath principle given at creation and confirmed in the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue is followed distinctly, for it is the Sabbath following six days of labor; but also it is the first day of the first week of the new Jewish religious year.

The Jewish memorial Sabbath always began on a fixed date in the year, just like our New Year's and Christmas Days, and not on a given day of the week (Exodus 12:1, 2; 13:3, 4). No method is known for computing the calendar by which a full year may be divided into an equal number of weeks of seven days each. Bible scholars are agreed that it is not possible to know accurately what calendar Israel followed before their captivity. If, as some think, it was a thirteen-month year with twenty-eight days each, this accounts only for 364 days, another day must be added somewhere to fill out the required 365 days. If, as some others think, it was twelve months of thirty days each, five intercalary days must be added to fill out the year. But in either case it is not possible for a regular

week of seven days to be observed throughout the year and have the new year begin with a Sabbath, one extra day must be accounted for in order to bring this about. It is also important to note that there was in this first month a fixed work day, the tenth day of the month, when they were to gather the lambs to sacrifice (Exod. 12:3). This could not be a Sabbath, for no such work could be performed on a Sabbath, hence a weekly cycle Sabbath was impossible.

An example of this is our present New Year's Day. This year, 1939, it came on Sunday, but it will be 1950 before it occurs on Sunday again, and between these dates it will fall on all of the other days of the week. So an extra Sabbath had to be inserted in Israel's calendar somewhere to permit their memorial Sabbath to fall upon the first day of the month of Abib, the new year's day of their religious year.

Was this day inserted? Did God plan for its insertion, or was it man made? There are scriptural suggestions that it was inserted and according to the plan of God, and that this change came at the time of the Feast of Pentecost. The date of the Feast of Pentecost was established by counting "from the morrow after the sabbath" (Lev. 23:15-21) at Passover time when the grain harvest began and a wave sheaf was presented to God, "even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days;" and this "morrow after the seventh sabbath" was Pentecost; a Sabbath celebrating the rest after the labors of grain harvest, for this feast marked the close of the grain harvest when bread made from the freshly harvested grain was presented to God. This Pentecost was a holy convocation or Sabbath in which no servile work was to be done. Thus two Sabbaths, or memorial days, came in consecutive order, making a forty-eight hour Sabbath, which they observed. Since the Sabbath principle demanded six days of labor between Sabbaths, the seventh day or weekly memorial Sabbath would be numbered from Pentecost, and thus it would continue throughout the year. With this forty-eight hour Sabbath the religious year was adjusted to the calendar year and the first of the month of Abib would fall on the Sabbath. Thus it is apparent from the Scriptures that the Jewish memorial weekly Sabbath changed each year at the Feast of Pentecost.

But do not the Jews observe the seventh day of our week, Saturday, as their Sabbath today? They do. How do they reckon this seventh day as the Sabbath? They have adjusted their religious year to the present calendar year. The mode of reckoning time now used by the Jews, we are told, was perhaps perfected by Rabbi Hillel in the year 359 or 360 A.D. Some students place the date of this change as late as 500 A.D. Jewish authorities themselves recognize that there is no direct connection between their present calendar and that used by the original Israelites. In the Jewish encyclopedia these statements are found: "The modern Jewish calendar is adapted to the Greek computation exclusively." "The modern Jewish calendar seems to have been inaugurated in 363 A.D., and Rabbi Hillel appears to have modified it by introducing some innovations."

This present Jewish calendar differs from the original calendar at least in this fact that the Sabbath now has a fixed day in the week (Saturday) and needs not to be adjusted to a fixed date in the year. It is worthy of note that this observance of Saturday as Sabbath by the Jews dates no farther back than the fourth century after Christ. So Saturday is no nearer the original Jewish memorial weekly Sabbath, than Sunday or any other day of the week.

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CHAPTER IV
JESUS AND THE SABBATH

Two facts have been considered in our study regarding the Sabbath; first, the Sabbath principle stated at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil; and second, that the Jewish Sabbath was a memorial day, a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, a day signifying their sacred relation to God, and a sign of a perpetual covenant between God and Israel. Also we noted that it is apparent that the Jewish memorial Sabbath changed annually. Now we will consider Jesus and His relation to the Jewish Sabbath.

Jesus was a Jew and He strictly observed all of the requirements made upon Him by their religion. Certain Jewish religious ceremonies were observed in His childhood. It was His regular custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Luke 4:16). All of Jesus' life was lived under the strict requirements of the Jewish religion. Even a few hours before His death He observed the Passover with His disciples. He lived as a Jew and not in the Christian dispensation. The Sabbath that Jesus kept was the regular Jewish memorial Sabbath, just as was the Passover. He kept the regular Jewish Passover.

Jesus differed from the religious leaders of His day, in His thoughts concerning the Sabbath. They condemned Him for healing the lame on the Sabbath, but He assured them it was proper to do good on the Sabbath day (Luke 6:6-11). His disciples plucked grain to eat on the Sabbath and this did not meet with the approval of the Jewish religious leaders (Luke 6:1-5); but Jesus approved the acts, citing them to a similar act on the part of King David. He emphatically declared the purpose of the Sabbath: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Here a deeper fact is emphasized than the mere observance of a day; it is the reiteration of the Sabbath principle given at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, a sacred day of rest following six days of toil. This Sabbath principle was made for man, for the benefit of man physically, mentally and spiritually. It is not a bondage placed upon man -- "man was not made for the sabbath"; but it is a distinct benefit and blessing to man, "the sabbath was made for man."

Another fact is apparent throughout the entire life of Jesus, that is, His consciousness that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He stated that not one jot or one tittle shall pass from the law till all be fulfilled. He also warned against the breaking of even the least of the Commandments, and that of teaching men to do likewise. So the whole purpose of His life was to fulfill the law.

The supreme moment of the fulfillment of much of that law, the time when numerous jots and tittles passed away through fulfillment, was in the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. The Passover, commemorating Israel's mighty deliverance from Egypt, was fulfilled and passed away; for there Christ became our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). All of the ceremonial practices connected with

Israel's religious observances pointed toward a time of future fulfillment, these all were fulfilled by Jesus, and hence they passed away.

Did the crucifixion have any particular and definite relation to Israel's memorial Sabbath? It did. Paul gives a striking and illuminating statement concerning this, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ" (Col. 2:14-17).

Several things are evident in this scripture; first, the word "sabbath" used here, is never used in any passage of the New Testament of any day but the weekly Sabbath. Second, that Paul did not mean some of the other feast days is clearly shown by the fact that in this very verse he distinctly distinguishes a feast day, or a new moon, from a Sabbath day. And this was the order used in the Old Testament (see 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:13). Third, Christians are not to be judged on the basis of the Jewish memorial Sabbath. If Paul did not mean this Jewish memorial Sabbath, why did he use the terms here used? The evidence is too conclusive to be questioned, the Jewish memorial Sabbath was fulfilled and done away in the cross along with other ceremonial observances belonging to the Jews, which were a shadow of things to come. Therefore the actual day of the week Jesus observed as a Sabbath is of little consequence for He kept the Jewish memorial Sabbath which was fulfilled and done away in the cross.

But let us note carefully that the Sabbath principle -- that of a sacred day of rest after six days of toil -- given at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue was not done away. That principle is fixed in the very nature of the universe, it will never be done away. But the Jewish memorial Sabbath, based upon this Sabbath principle and counted from the time cycle established after their deliverance from Egypt was here fulfilled and done away. That memorial Sabbath was a shadow, Christ had fulfilled that and the shadow is no longer apparent or needed, but a new memorial was made possible.

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CHAPTER V

THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE SABBATH

Thus far we have emphasized that the Jewish memorial Sabbath was to that nation the application of the Sabbath principle given in creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, namely, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil. In the last chapter we noted that this Jewish memorial Sabbath, along with ceremonial practices, which were a shadow of things to come were fulfilled and done away by Jesus in the cross, but the Sabbath principle remained and a new memorial was suggested. Now we will consider the early church and the Sabbath.

It must ever be kept in mind that the leaders and most of the members of the early Christian Church were Jews. The full recognition of the Christian light did not dawn upon them instantly, it came gradually. True they received much light with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, but they had much to learn down through the coming years. An example is their slowness to comprehend that the scope of the Christian Church was universal -- it was not to be confined to Jews. Even their leader, Peter, had to experience divine instruction in a vision on a housetop in Joppa before he would cross over racial barriers and preach the gospel to a devout Gentile, Cornelius, and his house. The fulfillment of the "shadow of things to come" -- those ceremonies and memorials of the Jews -- was accomplished in a short time; the recognition of this fulfillment by the Church and the transition from the old "shadow" to the true substance came gradually.

It is not strange that we find the early church leaders attending Sabbath services in the synagogue; not strange because they were still Jews and the full significance of the new light had not dawned upon them, and further, because their vision of the gospel was "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Hence they would take the gospel to the place where worshipping Jews were found, and in the Acts of the Apostles occasional reference is made to the fact that the apostles and others preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. No more significance can be placed upon their attendance at and preaching in the synagogue than their evangelistic passion to reach the people with the gospel, and the fact that they were Jews as well as Christians.

It is evident that their worship as Jews on the Jewish Sabbath was not entirely satisfying to these Christians, for there are indications that they observed another stated time of worship, namely the first day of the week. Several scriptures mention the first day of the week and imply that worship meetings were held on this day. Paul met with the brethren at Troas on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The manner in which this meeting is stated indicates that this first day of the week meeting was an established custom. That it was the custom of the early Christians to break bread -- in love feast -- is stated (Acts 2:42), and it is here apparent that this breaking of bread was on the first day of the week. Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to make their contributions on the first day of the week, and this implies a service on that day.

Where did this first day of the week custom originate? It is apparent that it was closely connected with the memorial of the resurrection of Jesus. The risen Lord met with the assembled disciples on the evening of His resurrection, the first day of the week (John 20:19-23). Also He met with them eight days later, which would be the first day of the next week (John 20:26-29).

Jesus nowhere stated that there would be a new memorial Sabbath, although He did emphasize that the old shadow would be fulfilled. He did tell His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." To the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was committed the formulation of doctrine, the settlement of problems relative to the observation of the law of Moses, the compilation of the New Testament canon, and the establishment of a Christian Sabbath.

The first church council settled the question of the Christian Church being burdened with the Jewish law, its ceremonies and its customs. It is significant to note that their findings make no mention of the Sabbath (Acts 15:28, 29). In post-apostolic days the Christian Church, through the guidance of the Holy Ghost, gradually recognized inspirational value in the writings of the books which we now have as the New Testament. We have not one statement in these New Testament books to indicate that they were ordained of God to be included in the Scriptures, the formation of the scripture canon was left to the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But we accept without question this New Testament canon as scripture -- God's Word to us.

The observation of Sunday, the first day of the Julian calendar week, was also gradually adopted by the Christian Church as the Christian Sabbath under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This Christian Sabbath became a memorial of the resurrection of Jesus, who arose on the first day of the week, and also of the official advent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which was also the first day of the week, and in reality Pentecost marked the birthday of the Church. The old Jewish memorial Sabbath had been fulfilled and done away (Col. 2:13-17), in its place under the leadership of the Holy Spirit the Church accepted a new memorial, the resurrection, and thus the Sabbath principle -- that of a sacred day of rest after six days of toil -- given at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue is preserved in our Christian memorial Sabbath. We have as much grounds for rejecting the inspiration and authority of any of the books of the New Testament as we have for rejecting the Christian Sabbath, a memorial of the resurrection, for both were accepted and established by the same process, namely, by the Church through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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CHAPTER VI THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

The Sabbath principle given by God at creation and confirmed in the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue is, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, or "the sanctity of every seventh day, at whatever time the cycle may commence." In previous chapters we have noted that the cycle for the Jewish Sabbath began at the time of their deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12:1, 2; 13:3, 4; 16:10-31). Also we have noted that this Jewish Sabbath was a memorial (Deut. 5:12-15; Exodus 31:13-17) and a sign of a perpetual covenant between God "and the children of Israel forever" (v. 17). Further we have noted that this Jewish memorial Sabbath, which, with their feasts and ceremonies, was a "shadow of things to come," was fulfilled by Jesus, "nailing them to his cross" (Col. 2:13-17).

Early in the history of the Christian Church they observed some form of worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). As has been noted all of the leaders of the Church in New Testament times were Jews, hence they continued meeting in the Jewish synagogues; however it is evident that the purpose of their meeting there was to bring the gospel, "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." But even among the Christians of that early day there seemed to be some division concerning the day of worship, as is indicated by Paul's statement to the Roman Christians (Rom. 14:4-6).

The three outstanding church leaders, successors to the apostles, were Clement of Rome who, says Irenaeus, "had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, and had the preaching of the blessed apostles still sounding in his ears"; Ignatius of Antioch, said by Eusebius to have been a disciple of Saint John; and Polycarp of Smyrna, of whom Irenaeus says, "I can tell the place where the blessed Polycarp sat and taught and how he related his conversations with John and others who had seen the Lord." Fifty years later Justin Martyr became prominent in the church of Rome. In the latter part of that century (second) the three leading churchmen are, Irenaeus of Lyons in south of France, Clement of Alexandria (Egypt), and Tertullian of Northern Africa. These leaders of the Christian Church in widely separated places, have left testimonies relative to the Christian Sabbath being Sunday, the first day of the week. We will give a few of these quotations:

Barnabas, the companion of the Apostle Paul, is quoted as saying, "We observe the eighth day with gladness, in which Jesus rose from the dead, and having manifested Himself to His disciples, He ascended into heaven."

Ignatius wrote at the beginning of the second century, "Let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection day, the queen and chief of all days. . . . No longer sabbatizing, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which our life sprang forth."

Justin Martyr, about 145 A.D., wrote a hook in the form of a dialog with a Jew, Trypho, telling him of Jesus in order to win him to the Christian faith. In response to Trypho's taunt that the Christians had no festivals or Sabbaths Justin clearly claims that Sunday is a new Sabbath. "On the day called the day of the Sun (Sunday)," Justin says, "a gathering takes place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, so long as the time permits. Then the reader stops and the leader impresses by word of mouth, and urges the imitation of these good things." In writing to Emperor Antonius, Justin is quoted as saying, "On Sunday we all assemble in common, since that is the first day, . . . the same day our Savior Jesus Christ rose from the dead."

Irenaeus in 167 A.D. said, "On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keep the Sabbath meditating on the law, and rejoicing in the works of God."

Clement wrote in 192 A.D., "A Christian according to the command of the gospel observes the Lord's day, thereby glorifying the resurrection of the Lord. The eighth day is the Lord's day." He is quoted also as saying, "The old seventh day has become nothing more than a working day."

Tertullian says in 200 A.D., "Sundays we give to joy, we observe the day of the Lord's resurrection, free from every hindrance of anxiety and duty, laying aside our worldly business lest we give place to the devil." He is further quoted as saying, "The Lord's day is the holy day of the Christian Church. We have nothing to do with the Sabbath. The Lord's day is the Christian's solemnity."

There can be no confusion here. These writers call the Lord's Day the first day of the week and this is a memorial of the resurrection. Also the Lord's Day is called Sunday, which is the seventh day, a day of worship, after six days of toil. Here is the application of the Sabbath principle -- a sacred day of rest after six days of toil -- revealed at Creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, to the Christian cycle.

Constantine, the Roman emperor, became a Christian and in 321 A.D. made Sunday the civil Sabbath of the empire, by issuing the following edict: "Let all the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades rest on the venerable day of the sun; but let those who are situated in the country, freely and at full liberty attend to the business of agriculture; because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn and planting vines; lest, the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted by Heaven. Given the seventh day of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls, each of them for the second time." It is claimed that by this edict Constantine changed the Sabbath from the seventh day (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday). From the reading of this edict it is evident that such claim is based on a very slim margin. The evidence is conclusive that Constantine merely recognized a prevailing Christian practice of worship on Sunday, the Christian memorial Sabbath, or Lord's day -- a practice observed since the days of the apostles -- he did not originate the first day Sabbath. An illustration of this fact is found in the observance of our national Thanksgiving Day. Since the days of the Pilgrim fathers, the annual Thanksgiving Day has been observed to some degree. Several times by presidential proclamation the entire nation observed national Thanksgiving, more frequently it was observed through proclamation of the governors of the different states. It was President Lincoln in 1864 who started the present custom of the annual presidential proclamation for a national Thanksgiving Day. Did

Lincoln start Thanksgiving Day? No, no more than did Constantine change the Sabbath day. They put official sanction upon a custom regularly observed for several centuries prior to their proclamations.

The testimonies of the early church leaders give evidence that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Sabbath principle at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue is preserved in a new cycle with a new memorial; the first day of the week, Sunday, a memorial of our Lord's resurrection. The Christian memorial Sabbath, Sunday, is no more of human origin than is the New Testament canon a strictly human arrangement. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Christian Sabbath was recognized and accepted on exactly the same basis and by the same outstanding church leaders as the Christian scriptural message, the New Testament, was recognized and accepted. Sunday is the Christian memorial Sabbath.

The Christian Sabbath
By
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CHAPTER VII THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

In this message we have noted two facts relative to the Sabbath. First, there is the Sabbath principle -- namely a sacred day of rest after six days of toil given by God at creation when He blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, and this principle is reiterated and confirmed in the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue. Second, we have seen this Sabbath principle adapted to the nation of Israel in their memorial Sabbath. We have noted from scripture that the cycle of time for reckoning the Jewish Sabbath began with their deliverance from Egypt, that this Sabbath was a memorial of their deliverance, a recognition of Israel's sacred relation to God, and a sign of a perpetual covenant between God "and the children of Israel forever."

This Jewish memorial Sabbath was meant only for that nation for God said, "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever" (Exodus 31:17). Further, the laws and ceremonies connected with the Jewish Sabbath could be observed only within a limited geographical area. Since one of these was the prohibition of making fire on the Sabbath it could not become a world-wide or universal Sabbath. Like the ceremonial practices of Judaism, the Jewish memorial Sabbath, was fulfilled by Jesus and hence the laws regarding that Sabbath are not binding on Christians; therefore we are to let no man judge us in respect to Sabbath days (Col. 2:14-17).

The present so-called seventh day (Saturday) of the Gregorian calendar can in no manner be considered the same as the seventh day of the Fourth Commandment. That day emphasized a principle, a sacred day of rest following six days of toil. It is not meant to specify a particular day of the week primarily. In fact the Jews today recognize that "the modern Jewish calendar seems to have been inaugurated in 363 A.D., and Rabbi Hillel appears to have modified it by introducing some innovations" (Jewish Encyclopedia). It appears that the observance of Saturday as Sabbath by the Jews dates no farther back than the fourth century after Christ.

The Christian Sabbath is not a continuation of the old Jewish memorial Sabbath. It does fulfill the Sabbath principle given at creation and confirmed in the Fourth Commandment, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil. The Christian Sabbath is a day of worship with a new memorial, the resurrection of Jesus. Its cycle of time reckoning began with the resurrection of Jesus and Pentecost, the birthday of the Church.

The Christian Sabbath is a new covenant day. The old covenant and Sabbath was but "a shadow of things to come," the new covenant and Sabbath is better, established on better promise -- "the body is Christ." The old covenant was a legal system in which men served in bondage to that law, in "the oldness of the letter." The new covenant is a love system, God's laws are put into their hearts, and written in their minds (Heb. 10:16); and we serve God in "the newness of spirit." The Sabbath principle, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, belongs to the new covenant. We have our new covenant memorial Sabbath; but it is to be observed in "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us

free, and not . . . with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). This Christian Sabbath is suitable to universal observation. People of all climes, times, conditions and places can observe the Christian Sabbath, memorial of our Lord's resurrection, "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." It is not national, it is world-wide -- as wide in its observance as is the Christian Church in its scope.

Jesus emphasized a new element for the Sabbath day. He refused to be bound by the traditional legalism of the Pharisaical Sabbath. He stressed that the Sabbath was for man's benefit, not for his bondage; that on the Sabbath we are to do good, that works of necessity are permissible. Through His resurrection we have a living religion, a triumphant salvation. The memorial of this day of life, the Christian Sabbath, is not to deteriorate into a day of legalism; it is a day of rejoicing, a day for Christian worship and service, a sacred day of rest and worship after six days of toil. We observe this day from a loving heart in which is written God's law.

It is the Lord's day; the memorial of His triumphant resurrection. On this day we give special honor to Him. We refrain from doing things which would hinder us in giving our very best to Him in worship and praise. We cease from our regular activities for physical refreshing, mental relaxation, and spiritual edification. This Lord's day is symbolic of that eternal Sabbath, when all creation shall rest from its struggles and the whole universe shall "Crown Him Lord of All."

Christians are not bound to keep Saturday as Sabbath, since all that was shadowed by the Jewish Sabbath was fulfilled by Jesus on the cross. We gather to worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, not to continue the observance of Jewish Sabbath, but to fulfill the Sabbath principle given at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, to worship the living Christ -- a memorial of our Lord's resurrection. We do as Ignatius exhorted the Christians to do in 101 A.D., "Let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection day, the queen and chief of all days. . . . No longer sabbatizing, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which our life sprang forth."