



**REMEMBER THE SABBATH**

*Sabbath*  
~~Holy Days~~

# SOMETHING TO REMEMBER HIM BY

*We like to remember the accomplishments of our fellow human beings. We set up philanthropies and foundations named after great individuals in the hope that what they've done won't fade like the proverbial blade of grass. But there's one unique memorial that honors someone who's still alive—and participating in this living memorial can change your life!*

**H**uman beings have traditionally honored men and women who make significant contributions to the human family. We remember George Washington's birthday, build memorials to Abraham Lincoln, and put Queen Elizabeth's picture on currency.

But there is an individual who's done far more for mankind than any of the great or famous people we commonly recognize; someone who's a greater inventor, artist, humanitarian and philanthropist than any of the human beings we normally honor. And yet most of the time we fail to properly appreciate and remember all that he's contributed to the human race.

Just who is this powerful and talented individual who's given us so much? By now you've probably guessed: He's the Creator and Maker of this universe—the one who took the time and trouble to make us and everything around us!

We like to remember men, but God wants to be remembered, too—not for reasons of ego, but for a very different reason. And God has set up His own memorial to that end.

People usually don't get to decide what kind of memorial they'll have after they're dead. But God is alive, and He has decided what His memorial is to be. It's not just a few words carved in stone or written on parchment somewhere, but a living, dynamic reminder of what He has done in the past, what He's doing now, and what He's going to do in the future.

This memorial to God is the Sabbath day. It's a memorial to Him, but also a generous gift to humanity. Mark 2:27 tells us: "The sabbath was made for man."

**His Past Gifts.** In Genesis, the first chapter, God reveals Himself as the Creator and Giver of all good things: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." There's an awful lot contained in that short statement—mankind is only now beginning to scratch the surface of the complex and wonderful world God put together. Think about it. Everything you see around you, from the gigantic and ancient sequoia to the smallest and shortlived gnat, was designed, given life and brought into balance with the rest of the incredibly complex environment by the great Creator God. God's fantastic *magnum opus* includes the stars, the sun, and this floating greenhouse we call the earth that goes hurtling through space in orbit around the sun. It includes our weather patterns, our oceans, and all the teeming life forms that inhabit this planet.

Now if a person or a corporation had done what God did—developed a fly, or a bird, or a tree, for example—how much publicity do you think they'd want to receive? But God humbly summarizes these mind-bending accomplishments in just a few paragraphs in the book of Genesis. And after that brief summary, He inspired these words to be written: "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" (Gen. 2:2-3).

Why did God insert a day of rest into this seven-day cycle of creation? He could have rested on the first day,

or the fifth. He could have ended the cycle at six days. But God inserted an extra day in which He did nothing in the way of creating.

So why the Sabbath? What is it for? Just this: The seventh day is an integral part of the same process of creation. It symbolizes the fact that God is *still creating*—the crowning part of His creation is still incomplete. And the Sabbath day is a memorial to that creation process.

As a reminder and memorial of creation, it shows us that God is still the Creator and the Life-giver, and that His process of creation for us is not finished. The Sabbath reminds us that it is God's intention to give us physical life now as human beings and life eternal later on as spirit beings. So the Sabbath is a reminder of a life-producing sequence that is as yet incomplete.

In the account of Adam and Eve, God said of the epitome of His creation, humanity: "Let us create man in our image, after our likeness—let's make him like us."

Well, people are certainly not like God now. We might have the general form and shape of God, and we might to a limited degree have some of His attributes and qualities, but we don't have the character or power of God. When we compare ourselves to Him we are quite limited. But our potential for growth in this direction is limitless. (For more on this, send for the free booklets *Why Were You Born* and *Just What Do You Mean—Born Again?*)

**The Billionaire.** In the Bible God reveals Himself over and over again as a multibillionaire trying to give something good away to humanity.

God tried to bring the nation of ancient Israel into a land flowing with milk and honey, the "glory of all lands."

But the people then, and people nowadays, stand back and try to second-guess this multibillionaire, saying, "Hmm . . . I wonder what He's after." He wants to give us everything—ultimately: the good life He has, including a purpose in life, palatial surroundings, a sense of achievement and contribution, and joy, forever and ever.

It's amazing, isn't it, that God is having such a hard time giving all these good things away? Human beings seem to always say, "Aw, forget that. I want to live my life my own way."

If you met a rich man, one of the first questions you might ask him is, "How did you make your money?" Then, "Have you got any tips for me?" These are natural questions, and they're questions God answered for ancient Israel. He showed them how wealth could be acquired. He gave them a system—told them how it was done—didn't hold anything

back. Then He said, "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" (Ezek. 20:12). God is the source of instruction in how to live; the source of all good!

But ancient Israel wanted to do it "their way." And God told them over and over again through the mouth of His prophets, "Remember that I am the Lord your God," and "Walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and hallow my sabbaths. . . ." But Israel didn't do these things. They failed to keep His Sabbath and gradually lost contact with Him. Similarly, those who today fail to keep the Sabbath have lost the connecting link between man and God. And when man forgets the Sabbath, he's in trouble.

So every time Israel forgot God, they got in trouble. They polluted His Sabbath, ignored His laws, and began to follow the practices of the pagan peoples around them—even going so far as to practice infant sacrifice. God's warning came to pass: "I swore . . . that I would scatter

them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my sabbaths. . . ." (Ezek. 20:23, 24).

The book of Lamentations is a pitiful account of how far Israel fell when they forgot who God was. The Bible says that all scripture is inspired by God for our instruction. So what does the book of Lamentations teach you and me today? It shows how far a nation can sink into depravity—even cannibalism—once they forget their Maker.

God has done everything He could to give us an historical account of what happened to multiple millions of people over thousands of years of history who forgot this one overriding point: God is God, the Creator, the Source of life, the only Giver of good things, the only one in the whole universe who can give us eternal life.

And God wants us, for our benefit, never to forget that. That's why He gave us the Sabbath. That's what it's all about. Such a memorial is worth remembering. □

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# A New Look at an Old Commandment

*For centuries religionists have tried to divorce the fourth commandment from the other nine commandments in the Decalogue, contending that the Sabbath is mere ritual. They haven't understood the moral and ethical reasons for which God devised it in the first place.*

In any given weekend in the United States, the freeways from the cities to the countryside will be clogged with cars and campers. The cities pour forth their teeming masses, yearning to breathe free—and cleaner—air. Though people have just gotten off work, they are, ironically, frantically *working* in order to get away from work!

Some families wryly proclaim that

instead of fighting bumper-to-bumper traffic in a national park they will stay home and rest during their weekend vacation.

The weekend throngs are enslaved to the world of work. They may have "leisure," but they don't use it leisurely: the frantic weekend hardly disturbs the rhythm of the work-week.

Which is where we broach the

question of the fourth commandment. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . in it thou shalt not do any work" (Ex. 20:8-9). Of all the Ten Commandments, it is the one which has come under the most fire. Theologians delicately excise it from our religious consciousness by asserting that the Sabbath was a specific institution given to the ancient Jews in order to keep them, as God's na-

tion, symbolically separate. In this way of looking at it, the Sabbath has nothing intrinsically to do with one's relationship to God or man; it is merely a hangover from bygone days, something now out of date. God's own version of planned obsolescence.

Most people see the eminent logic of the commandments against murder, stealing and lying. Some nonreligious people even believe that coveting and adultery are wrong. And most *religious* people see the logic of the commandments about worshipping the one true God, not idols, and not taking His name in vain. But the Sabbath gets left out. It is not kept because most people—including theologians—don't see how keeping a period of time "holy" could possibly be important to God.

**The Beat of a Different Drum.** But the Sabbath is a means by which God protects His investment in human beings. If God had made the Sabbath *only* because we need the weekly rest (and, of course, we do), He wouldn't have made a *specific* period of time holy. "Any ol' time" would do.

The Sabbath is justified because it protects and enhances man's relationship to God. It exists to keep us in a proper frame of mind. We live in a grubby, material world of everyday things. We only see material things. There is, as we face each day, a built-in bias towards materialism. It isn't hard at all to avoid anything spiritual. And unless we take some time to consider, to *think* upon a realm other than the material, most of us might plod through our lives oblivious to the major facts of the universe.

There is no reason for a Sabbath—a day of rest to consider God and His creation—without a God. We need time to think about that God—because, even though God really exists, the natural tendency is to go through life as if He *didn't* exist.

Most men, wrote Thoreau, live lives of "quiet desperation," like so many bees in a hive, squandering their lives in a furious race to get to the end, never considering *why* they are alive in the first place.

The Sabbath marches to the beat of a different drum. Or, more properly, *strolls*. It presents us with an opportunity to consider the *whys* of

life, not just the *hows*. It represents a chance to get one's head on straight, a time to achieve a philosophical orientation in life; to know *where* one should aim in life.

**The Eternal Treadmill.** Our routinized, modern "work" gives us a strong push to materialism, and subtly tells us that the only reality is grubby, mundane, earthly and perceptible. If it completely inundates our life, it cuts us off from God. Paul condemned ancient thinkers who did not like to keep God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28), and David noted that it is the *evil* who say in their hearts that God doesn't see them (Ps. 10:11)—in other words, that God doesn't really exist.

We can often get so bound up in our work—or our various recreational activities that we do in order to rest up for more work—that we forget what work is all about in the first place. One can spend his life in a corporate treadmill, if he's an ambitious type, a contestant in what is properly called a "rat race," and never ask himself why he's doing it.

It is only as we stand off, ponder the universe and our existence, consider God, His laws and His creation, and place ourselves consciously in the context of the whole universe, that we can be fully human. That is one way in which the Sabbath was made *for man* (Mark 2:27). It is not a binding force to enclose us in even *more* mundaneness, but a liberating force for freeing our minds and bodies from ordinary, humdrum existence.

In our daily lives, we are often barely conscious of what we do. We get up, eat breakfast, we go to work, we get on with the household chores, we do our work, we continue the same things, often by rote. In one way of looking at it, we might as well be robots, preprogrammed to a certain way of doing things. The part of us that is uniquely human, our intellectual consciousness, may not even come into play. Even if we work "with our brains," we still may never be *self-conscious* in the sense of acutely realizing our unique position in the universe—in the whole of God's creation. The Sabbath gives us time to consider ourselves in relation to the around.

# Heaven



# or Hell?

Where do you think you're going? Heaven, hell, or maybe only six feet under? As a child you may have been taught about life after death, but what does the *Bible* have to say on this all-important subject?

For a complete explanation send for these two booklets:

- Is There a Real Hell Fire?
- What Is the Reward of the Saved?

To receive your free copies, write to our office nearest you. (See addresses on the last page.)

**Man Who Is Born to Work.** A rather jaded French writer expressed a modern attitude toward life: "Work is less boring than pleasure." He was noting the desperation of life without God: without work, such a life would be boring, meaningless and absurd.

The same meaninglessness is also the problem with the traditional ersatz sabbath that most of Christendom has produced, the religious observance of Sunday. The *authority* for worshipping on Sunday derives from tradition and history, not the Scriptures. (Some scrupulously celebrate Sunday as a commemoration of the resurrection, but this neither Christ nor the apostles anywhere commanded. We are, however, enjoined to observe the annual anniversary of His sacrificial death for our sins. Write for our free booklet *How Often Should We Partake of the Lord's Supper?*)

Anything deriving its authority mainly from tradition and history is sufficiently fuzzy, and allows for enough spiritual "fudging" so that the net effect of Sunday observance is simply to make it another day of the week, one on which to play golf or mow one's lawn. The Sabbath, unlike Sunday, is firm; the source of its authority clear.

The Greeks had a myth about Sisyphus who was condemned to con-

tinually roll a large stone up a hill, the stone always rolling back down the hill just as he was about to get it to the top. Modern man, without the genuine Sabbath, is like that: continually working, immersed in material life, but never quite attaining his goal of lasting happiness because material things are temporary.

The Sabbath is classless. Everyone—no matter what he does the other six days of the week—has basically the same leisure time for reflection and contemplation as the richest man of property. For one seventh of the week, everyone is commanded to take leisure time to think things over.

It is no accident that totalitarian governments make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for their subjects to keep the Sabbath. Those governments recognize no other reality than the material, and no higher authority than themselves. They claim, in effect, the prerogatives of God. They dare not let any subject recognize the existence of God by keeping the day which marks Him as Creator.

Totalitarian governments constitute the extreme form of a world of "total work." Everyone under their control is a cog in the materialist wheel, reduced to a mere function, subordinated for the good of a material commonweal. But the Sabbath is

an institution which shows that man is God's creation, made by Him for a purpose.

**The Celebration of the Universe.** The Sabbath is, in effect, a celebration of the prospect of man's becoming God.

The atheist existentialist philosophers have been content to tell us that human life is absurd, that all of man's life is merely a preparation for death. And, given the materialistic premises of these writers, life is absurd. But God intends to make man into His image spiritually as He has already made him in His image physically. The weekly rest on the seventh day is a "celebration" of this fact.

Thus the Sabbath commandment embodies a principle as profoundly *moral* as any other of the Ten Commandments—it affects the deepest part of our being, what we believe about the origin and purpose of the universe in our heart of hearts. It is, in a sense, the commandment which God gave to keep us right internally, to keep our priorities and perspectives right.

God intends for us to become like Him. To do that, we need the "leisure time" which the Sabbath provides to *think* about our lives—to "examine ourselves," as the apostle Paul put it. God made the Sabbath to give us just such an opportunity. □

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# "REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY"

**R**EMEMBER the Sabbath day." Yes, "Remember." That's one of the Ten Commandments.

But today most everyone *forgets*. Professing Christians almost universally assume that the day to worship God is Sunday. The Sabbath of the Bible is either relegated to the Jewish people or a few "wayward" Protestant denominations and sects.

But why did God say, "Remember"?

When God gave the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel, the fourth one was worded like this:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the *seventh day* is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter,

your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates."

But why "remember"? Had the Sabbath existed previously?

"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord *blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it*" (Ex. 20:8-11, RSV).

The giving of the law occurred in the 15th century B.C. But the Sabbath had existed since the seventh day of creation week. That's why God said to "remember."

"The Sabbath was made for man . . ." (Mark 2:28), and the Sabbath was made when man was created. It dates from the time of Adam and Eve. Notice Genesis 2:2-3: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day. . . . And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work. . . ."

Plainly, Exodus 20 refers to Genesis 2, in almost identical language. Here, then, was the origin of the Sabbath. In both places the language strongly indicates that God attached a very unusual significance to the seventh day, although the details of this significance are not recorded until much later in the Bible.

Little by little we learn from the Scriptures about the Sabbath. Speaking of one of the biblical patriarchs, God said: "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). It would seem, then, that Abraham kept God's Sabbath; for God says he kept His commandments. In fact, that was how Abraham qualified to receive the promise of eternal inheritance of the earth.

Abraham was the "friend" of God (II Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8).

How did he become God's friend? Only by personal acquaintance and continued association with God. And those are the very purposes of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is a memorial of creation. As such, it points to the existence of a Creator, and its regular recurrence every seventh day continually reminds those who keep the Sabbath of its Creator. It was designed to keep Adam and Eve—and indeed all human beings ever since—in the appropriate relationship with their Creator. At the same time, it also provides the proper setting for a special recognition and worship of God which can be performed on no other day of the week.

But by the time God led Israel out of Egypt, these descendants of Abraham (through his faithful son Isaac

and grandson Jacob), had utterly forgotten their Creator and His laws—including the Sabbath. It became necessary for Him to reveal them again and put them in a codified form.

He began to do that—*before* they ever came to Mount Sinai—in giving the people manna. It was no accident that He gave them manna only on six days (a double portion on the sixth day) and none on the seventh. "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, *that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no*" (Ex. 16:4).

"Prove them"? "Law"?

What "law"? The law of resting on the seventh day of the week in order to honor God.

Some may argue at this point that which day we worship on makes no difference, that we can have that proper relationship with God no matter if we observe Saturday, Sunday, or any other time. But that is merely their opinion, not fact.

God says He made *the* seventh day holy, *not* just any day, or "one day in seven." And to God it *does* make a difference.

Notice what happened when some of the people went out to gather manna on the seventh day: "And the Lord said to Moses, How long *refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?*" (Ex. 16:28.) Obviously, God was not pleased. He had already given them manna for two days on the sixth day (or what we call Friday today), and He intended that the people rest on the day that was special to Him.

By the double portion of manna, then no manna, and of manna which did not spoil on the seventh day, God was performing a series of weekly miracles which lasted 40 years, to make sure the people knew which day to keep.

Later, God said: "Verily my sabbaths you shall keep: for it is *a sign* between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the Lord [Eternal] that doth *sanctify* you" (Ex. 31:13). Notice that the people were to keep the Sabbath in order that they might know that God had "sanctified" them—set

them apart as a special people. It had to do directly with their special association with God.

None will doubt that the Old Testament enjoined Sabbath keeping upon Israel of ancient time. But what should New Testament Christians do? Was the day of worship officially altered by Christ, and did the Church He established observe a different day?

Notice the example of Christ: "And he [Christ] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). Certainly there is nothing here about Jesus' changing the day of worship!

Christ continually observed the Sabbath throughout His life on earth. There was no exception, though Jesus Himself said, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28). The four Gospels abound with examples of Christ's teaching the people on the Sabbath day. He also healed the sick, doing good on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-12), which was lawful even though the Pharisees falsely accused Him for it.

Jesus' keeping the Sabbath, however, is not the point of contention. Most acknowledge He did so. But most people have come to believe that the day of Christ's resurrection (which they falsely assume was Sunday) was somehow responsible for changing the time of worship from the seventh day to the first.

This notion has gained overwhelming popularity in spite of the fact that no scriptural verification of it can be found. There are, of course, a few New Testament passages which are commonly cited as if they were indeed "proof" such a change was made. But do they really prove anything of the kind? Let's examine them and see.

Much is made of the mention that the disciples once were gathered together late in the evening on the first day of the week (John 20:19). But the verse contains not the slightest indication that they were conducting a worship service. Rather, the scripture states specifically that they were there in the upper room "for fear of the Jews" whom they thought would be seeking their lives.

## COLLECTIONS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK?

**T**HE story begins around A.D. 42 when Agabus foretold a famine that began in the reign of Claudius Caesar (Acts 11:27-28). Claudius ruled from A.D. 41 to A.D. 54.

Around the spring of A.D. 55 while the effects of this famine were still severe for the mainly very poor Christians of Judaea, Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the plight of the Judaeen Church. Read carefully and analyze I Corinthians 16:1 and 3:

"Now concerning the collection for the saints..." Paul was writing to them about a *special* collection—not about regular tithes and offerings which would be used primarily for the Work of God.

Verse three: "And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." This particular gathering included more than money—for several men were required to carry it to Jerusalem.

It was probably a few months later, during the summer of A.D. 55, that Paul again wrote to the Corinthians about this special emergency collection for the poor brethren at Jerusalem who were suffering the worst of the famine.

In II Corinthians 8:1 and 3 he wrote: "Now, brothers, I have to tell you about the grace God has given to the churches of Macedonia. . . . I can testify that up to their means, aye and beyond their means, they have given—begging me of their own accord, most urgently, for the favour of contributing to the support of the saints" (Moffatt translation).

In chapter 9:1-2 Paul again made reference to this collection: "Indeed it is quite superfluous for me to be writing to you about this charitable service to the saints; I know how willing you are, I am proud of it, I have boasted of you to the Macedonians: 'Achaia,' I tell them, 'was all ready last year.' And your zeal has been a stimulus to the majority of them" (Moffatt). And in verse 12: "For the service rendered by this fund does more than supply the wants of the saints, it overflows with many a cry of thanks to God" (Moffatt).

Clearly, this was a *special collection* being taken up among the Christians of Macedonia, Achaia and Galatia to aid their brethren in Judaea! When Paul

wrote to the Romans, probably during the winter of A.D. 56, he was taking this collection to Jerusalem.

"At the moment I am off to Jerusalem on an errand to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have decided to make a contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. Such was their decision; and yet this is a debt they owe to these people, for if the Gentiles have shared their spiritual blessings, they owe them a debt of aid in material blessings. Well, once I finish this business by putting the proceeds of the collection safely in their hands, I will start for Spain and take you on the way" (Rom. 15:25-28, Moffatt).

With all this background, I Corinthians 16:2 becomes very plain. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store. . . ." Paul was actually telling the Corinthian Christians to *work* on Sunday, the first day of the week. The RSV rendering of this verse is even plainer: ". . . each of you is to put something aside and store it up . . . so that no contributions need to be made when I come." They were to go out to gather what they wanted to contribute—and *store it at their own homes!* Obviously this was not *money*, but more likely *foodstuffs*—dried fruit, grain, etc.—for those in Jerusalem afflicted by the famine.

He concluded: ". . . That there be no gatherings when I come." Paul wanted them to spend the *first* day after his instructions were read to them on the Sabbath assembling their contributions so they would not have to do the work of gathering it when he came, and this could be repeated each week—putting this charity first lest it be forgotten—as their spring harvest progressed.

Here is an obvious command to do work on the first day of the week. Yet Christians are commanded to rest on the Sabbath day. This seeming dilemma is solved when one realizes which day of the week is truly the Sabbath in God's eyes.

Far from being a command to take up an offering every Sunday, I Corinthians 16:1-2 was an instruction for the Corinthians to do the work of assembling a special collection at their own homes for the brethren in Judaea.

While they were there, Christ appeared to them, having been resurrected. But there was no worship service in progress, nor had there been, nor did one take place later that evening or night (which of course was the beginning of the second day of the week).

Verse 26 discusses the fact that these very same disciples were together in that very same room exactly eight days later. On this occasion, Christ once again appeared to the group, for Thomas was among them. But do you suppose this establishes a day of Christian worship? Of course not. Neither incident has anything to do with establishing which day is the Sabbath.

Another incident in which the first day of the week is mentioned is described in Acts 20:7.

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

First of all, notice that this event took place in the evening—on what we would call Saturday night. Days were then reckoned from sunset to sunset, so it was already the first day of the week. But this was in no sense a Sunday meeting. The disciples were sitting down to eat dinner. (To "break bread" simply means to "eat a meal"—it is not referring to the "Lord's supper" or communion.) And Paul, knowing that this would be the last opportunity to speak to them, preached until midnight. Nothing particularly unusual about this (except the length of his sermon).

Next, notice that Paul was about to embark upon a journey the following morning—which would have been Sunday morning—and he was planning to travel on foot (verse 13). While his companions set sail after sunset that Saturday evening heading for the town of Assos, Paul remained behind to speak for the last time to the believers in Troas. He then planned to walk the 20 miles from Troas to Assos and meet his companions the next day (Sunday).

What this incident proves is not that the day of worship had been changed, but rather just the opposite. Paul's companions had waited until the Sabbath was over before they

sailed from Troas. Paul himself, after preaching his final sermon, was to leave the next morning (Sunday) and walk the twenty miles overland to Assos—a good hard day's work, to say the least. This incident actually reveals that Sunday was considered a common workday rather than the day of worship.

The one remaining mention of the first day is examined on page 8.

We have already seen how Christ kept the seventh day, and we have seen that there is no evidence anywhere in the Bible for Sunday observance. But did the true Church continue the practice of keeping the Sabbath? Notice: "But when they departed from Perga, they [Paul and Barnabas] came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, You men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on" (Acts 13:14-15).

Paul then stood up and spoke to the people, preaching Christ to them.

"And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the NEXT SABBATH" (verse 42).

Here was Paul's golden opportunity to explain that the Sabbath was no longer the proper day of Christian worship. But he said nothing of the sort. Instead he exhorted them "to continue in the grace of God" (verse 43). Surely this included keeping the Sabbath, for the people were meeting on the seventh day in the synagogue with the Jews who were present. It was a normal Jewish Sabbath service (see also verse 27).

These Gentiles were very interested in what Paul had to say. Did Paul tell them the Jewish way was obsolete? No. Instead he met with nearly the whole city on the next Sabbath (verse 44).

Next let's read the account in Acts 18:1-4: "After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila . . . with his wife Priscilla . . . and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought [worked]: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue EVERY SABBATH, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. . . ."

Here is one of the strongest texts in all the Bible supporting the observance of the Sabbath for New Testament Christians. Paul, while visiting in Corinth, worked during the week

at his occupation of tentmaking; and on the Sabbath he taught in the synagogue, speaking to both the Jews and the Gentiles. Later he preached only to the *Gentiles* (verse 6). He did this in Corinth for a year and a half (verse 11).

Paul "remembered" the Sabbath. Shouldn't you?

Paul commanded the Gentiles: "Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). We know that Christ always kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16); and we can read in Acts 17:2 that Paul also "as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures."

Both Paul and Christ followed the same custom—that of keeping the seventh day, the same day God ordained from the beginning. (For further proof, request our free booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*)

Christ did not come to change or destroy the law which was given in Old Testament times (Matt. 5:17), but to fulfill—to keep it and teach it to ALL who will be His followers.

The Bible reveals only *one* day of the week is holy time, not Sunday, and not just *any* day. So "remember" that to God it does make a real difference! □

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# The Sabbath and the Ten Commandments

*Is the Sabbath commandment still a part of the Decalogue? Or is it the only one of the Ten Commandments that is now obsolete?*

Nowhere in the New Testament are the Ten Commandments listed in order from one to ten. Nowhere in the New Testament is the Sabbath command repeated verbatim. Without the Old Testament we would not know the exact con-

struction of God's basic law. Without the Old Testament we would not even know that the exact number of commands is ten. These are startling facts that many of us have never stopped to consider.

What about it? Is there any logi-

cal biblical reason why we should keep the Sabbath today? Should we now keep all ten of the Ten Commandments—or only those points that pertain to our neighbor? Should we love God only in a very general manner?



**Old Testament Background.** By way of a brief background, the first Sabbath day followed the six working days of creation (Gen. 2:1-3). A command to remember this first Sabbath day was later inculcated into ancient Israel's basic constitutional law listed in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. These fundamental decrees were the only ones spoken and written by the Creator Himself. All other codified laws, statutes, judgments and ordinances were relayed to Moses through angelic mediation.

Moses later summarized God's personal role as Lawgiver in the book of Deuteronomy: "At that time the Lord said to me, 'Hew two tables of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tables which you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.' So I made an ark of acacia wood, and hewed two tables of stone like the first, and went up the mountain with the two tables in my hand. And he [God] wrote on the tables, as at the first writing, *the ten commandments* which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me" (Deut. 10:1-4, RSV).

Another summary account is also well worth quoting. It shows the vital significance that God attributes to His basic moral law: "... The Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them *hear my words* [personally and directly—*not* through either Moses or angelic mediation], so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children so.' And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain. ... Then the Lord spoke to you. ... And he declared to you his covenant, *which he commanded you* to perform, that is, the ten commandments ..." (Deut. 4:10-13).

**New Testament Application.** The apostle James referred to the whole Decalogue in his general epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel. He wrote: "If you really fulfil *the royal law*, according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by

the law as transgressors [sin is the transgression of the law; see I John 3:4]. For whoever keeps *the whole law* but fails in *one point* has become guilty of all of it. For he [remember this is God] who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' said also, 'Do not kill.' If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty" (James 2:8-12).

James, here, establishes several significant facts:

1) The royal law is summarized by the Old Testament command to love your neighbor as yourself (see Lev. 19:18).

2) The royal law has distinct points.

Two of those points include the sixth and seventh commandments as listed in the Decalogue.

4) Transgression of any of these points is sin.

5) Failure to keep one point is considered, spiritually, as breaking them all.

6) This royal law is also termed the "law of liberty."

7) Christians are to be judged by this royal law of liberty.

A few questions should be asked at this juncture. Do the points James mentions exclude the first four commandments defining man's relationship with his God? Or do they refer to *all ten* as duly delineated in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5? Are Christians required to *specifically keep* only the last six commandments defining man's proper association with his neighbor, while observing the first four only in some sort of an ethereal sense?

**Jesus and the Ten Commandments.** A rich young ruler once came to Jesus and asked Him a vitally important question: "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" (Matt. 19:16.) Jesus answered: "If you would enter life, *keep the commandments*" (verse 17). But the young man wanted to know *which* commandments Jesus was specifically referring to. "And Jesus said, 'You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, *and* You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (verse 18).

Here Jesus specifically enumerated five of the last six commandments and capped them off with the summary commandment to love your neighbor as yourself.

Later, a lawyer asked Jesus a very similar question: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25.) This time, because of the motive of the questioner, Jesus answered in a different manner: "He said to him, 'What is written in the law? How do you read?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself'" (verses 26-27). The lawyer replied by first loosely quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, and secondly Leviticus 19:18, in the Old Testament. Love of God was emphasized first and then love of neighbor. Jesus did not disagree with this lawyer: "And he said to him, 'You have answered right; do this, and you will live'" (verse 28).

Another account gives virtually the same answer in *Jesus' own words* (examine any red-letter Bible). Jesus was asked: "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. *This is the great and first commandment.* And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets'" (Matt. 22:36-40).

Are we to believe that the second overall commandment to love your neighbor has distinct points, but the first and great commandment has none? Are we to believe that the God of the New Testament does not tell us how we are to love Him in distinct, practical ways?

**New Testament Emphasis.** Nonetheless, whenever a substantial portion of the Decalogue is quoted in the New Testament, the emphasis is nearly always on "love your neighbor." Why?

James gives us just a hint. He wrote: "With it [the tongue] *we bless the Lord and Father*, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My

brethren, this ought not to be so" (James 3:9-10).

Apparently, at the time when the events were happening that occasioned the later writing of the New Testament documents, the main, outward problem revolved around the violation of the last six commandments specifically pertaining to one's neighbor. For instance, the Pharisees made a fetish out of the fourth commandment. They used it as an *excuse* not to love their neighbors. They severely criticized Jesus for healing a man blind from birth on the Sabbath day (see John 9). They, in reality, did *not* love the poor man. Instead, they wound up threatening to ostracize both him and his parents from the religious community. But the point is: They used the Sabbath commandment to camouflage their disobedience to the great principle of loving one's neighbor.

They even excused themselves from economic support of their aged parents for "religious reasons." You can read what Jesus said to these hypocrites in Mark 7:9-13. There is no way to dishonor one's parent and simultaneously love God. It simply can't be done!

The apostle John deeply understood this inextricable interrelationship between loving God and loving

neighbor and the irony of claiming to do one while omitting the other. "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, *cannot love God* whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

It also works the other way. Notice in the next chapter: "By this we know that we love the children of God, *when we love God* and obey his commandments" (1 John 5:2). Love and obedience to God go hand in hand: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome" (verse 3).

**The Sabbath Commandment.** As we stated earlier, nowhere is the Sabbath command repeated verbatim in the New Testament. However, *neither* are the first three commandments (showing us how to love God) repeated verbatim. This is a fact people often forget. One really has to hunt in the New Testament for even veiled references to these three commandments. In actual fact, there is more quantitative New Testament information and instruction concerning the Sabbath commandment than any one of these other three.

So the emphasis in the New Testament is on the last six commandments and also on *the interrelationship* between the broad principles bridging the last six and the first four. In Ephesians 5:5, the apostle Paul related that *covetousness* (number ten) is idolatry (number one).

However, the Ten Commandments, as magnified in the New Testament, still present one whole, complete law *with ten points*. Jesus tells us that to love God is the first and great commandment; James tells us that there are points to God's royal law; John tells us that we cannot hate our fellowman and love God simultaneously.

The Ten Commandments are a "complete package"—one commandment cannot be arbitrarily ripped out of God's ten-point law. If one is broken, all are broken in principle.

The Sabbath law is still one of the Ten Commandments! It has, however, been greatly magnified by Jesus' own personal example and instruction, typified by His famous statement that "the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Keeping God's seventh-day Sabbath does *not* involve an endless list of burdensome do's and don'ts. The Sabbath was intended to be a great blessing for mankind—*not* a terrible yoke of bondage. □

# The Pilgrim "Sabbath"

## A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Many Mormons, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Pentecostals, even some Baptists—in short, the descendants of the Puritans and their friends of 16th century Britain—call Sunday the "Christian Sabbath." The Puritans objected to many pagan features of so-called Christianity. They prohibited May Day and Christmas observances, etc., by law. They read the Bible, believed in real obedience to God, and taught strict adherence to

godliness as a way of life. They were strict about their "Sabbath." The Mayflower Pilgrims who landed on Plymouth Rock in 1620 were Puritans, as were others who landed later in different spots on the forbidding New England coast. They were a stern, God-fearing race who fled the Old World for the New World to practice the religion of their conscience in peace.

Their "Sabbath" was observed with rigor. But was it the Sabbath of God?

Let's go back to April 3, 1646. The first New England Thanksgiving was that year to be a quarter century old. By this time, in old England, there were Sabbath-keepers—observers of the seventh-day memorial of creation and creation's God (Ex. 31:13). Another Massachusetts spring was not far away as John Cotton wrote out his argument to Thomas Shepard to prove that the *first* day of the week, and not the seventh, should be observed as the Christian Sabbath

(Felt, *The Ecclesiastical History of New England*. p. 569).

Obviously, there was some diversity of opinion in Massachusetts about the Sabbath. And Felt goes on to record that the subject was at that time much discussed by New England ministers against objectors. But that anyone actually observed the seventh day in mid-17th century New England is not completely established. For the fact is that Puritans were Sunday observers, in spite of their use of the term "Christian Sabbath" (or just "Sabbath") to describe it, and contrary to the mistaken notions some Sabbath-keepers publish today. It is not true, as some direct descendants from the Pilgrims have claimed they "well knew," namely that all their "grandparents and great-grandparents knew that the Pilgrims of the Mayflower days were strict Sabbath-keepers of the seventh day of the week, instead of Sunday" (Kiesz in *The Sabbath Sentinel*, June 1975, p. 10; also Dugger and Dodd, *A True History of the True Religion*, pp. 265-266).

The term "Sabbath" (but meaning Sunday) even occurs in the ordinances of the Long Parliament (the Puritan-dominated body which ruled Britain during the 1640s when Oliver Cromwell was head of state in place of the rejected king). "Christian Sabbath," a term apparently newly coined about a hundred years before, occurs in an ordinance of 1644 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., "Sunday").

**How Sabbath Confusion Began.** With all due respect to the Puritan forebears of Britain and America for all their sincerity and determination, they made some egregious errors. Mistaking the Sabbath was one.

No informed person assumes that the Sabbath God instituted is Sunday. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, but Sunday is another and different institution. No one confused the two for centuries after the apostles. And none regarded the Exodus command to rest and be rejuvenated on the seventh day as in any way applicable or transferred to Sunday.

In fact, some professing Christians observed both Sunday (as a time of meeting for worship) and Sabbath (as a day of abstinence from work) into the beginning of the Dark Ages.

Some observed both days as days of assembly (as is recorded in Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 8 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*).

Gradually, the Catholic world departed from the Sabbath, alleging apostolic authority for having abolished or changed the commandment. Throughout the Middle Ages in Europe, Sunday was the only day honored weekly, but it was *not* primarily nor generally a rest day. That came later, and in a different cultural milieu.

**Sunday "Sabbath" Came With the Puritans.** The story of Henry the Eighth, king of England, is well known. He wanted his freedom to marry another, and to get his divorce he declared the independence of the Church of England from Rome in A.D. 1534. With detachment from the Pope, a certain degree of reformation began, as it had in Germany and neighboring countries on the European continent. A Puritan element, so-called because they desired to *purify* the church, began to make itself heard in England.

But the same no-Sabbathism that characterized both Catholicism and Protestantism on the Continent continued in the Church of England. Work went on seven days a week.

Henry died and was replaced with his short-lived son Edward, then briefly by Mary, and finally by Elizabeth I whose long reign lasted 45 years. Church services included the reading of the Ten Commandments, commandment by commandment, and after each commandment the congregation responded: "Lord, incline our hearts to keep this law" (Thomas Broad, *Three Questions Answered*, 1621, title page). But here was a problem.

What would they do when they prayed for the inclination and help to obey the *Fourth* Commandment? Most Puritans had but one answer: they would try to invest *Sunday* with all the sanctity and respect (including total abstinence from work, "profane" sports, or pleasure of any kind) that belonged to the true Sabbath. They claimed the Sabbath had been changed. Of course, that led them into doctrinal deep water, because, lacking any real or valid evidence in the New Testament for such a supposed change, the only possible

authority that remained for it was the Pope against whom they were in rebellion!

The whole thing was an embarrassment to the Established Church and churchmen. It was 1595 when Nicholas Bownd, D.D., a Suffolk clergyman, "boldly and crudely claimed for Sunday the authority and the observances of the Jewish Sabbath and maintained that they should be enforced by the State" (Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Sunday"). Bownd injected the term "Christian Sabbath, that it is a perpetuation of the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment, but that the day specified in that commandment has been changed by authority from the seventh to the first day of the week" (Belcher, *Religious Denominations in America*, p. 228).

His book was suppressed by order of the archbishop. The English church as a whole was not prepared for a Sabbath doctrine that extreme. Neither, in fact, were all Puritans.

Nevertheless, Bownd's theory, in the words of a learned contemporary, was a "most bewitching error, and the most popular infatuation that ever was embraced by the people of England" (*ibid.*).

It soon permeated the thinking of all Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. "The book had an immense vogue. It was translated and circulated on the Continent, where it exercised much influence. In England, accepted as an inspiration by some and as challenge by others, it gave rise to a literary controversy which lasted for a hundred years" (Hastings, *op. cit.*).

In the absence of requisite evidence for a Sabbath change ever having been made, many began to argue that actually the Fourth Commandment merely required the observance of "one day in seven," a contention plainly contradictory to the context of Genesis 2, Exodus 20:11, etc.

Some did indeed draw the obvious conclusion (though there is no evidence any acted correctly upon it for some years), as the old *Chambers' Encyclopedia* (article "Sabbath") declares: "Accordingly in the reign of Elizabeth [1558-1603] it occurred to many conscientious and independent thinkers...that the Fourth Commandment required of them the ob-

servance, not of the first, but of the specified *seventh* day of the week."

**Emergence of Seventh-Day Keeping.** Seventh-Day Baptists trace their origin back to 17th-century England. But actually the earliest known English-speaking keepers of the seventh day were Puritans. John Traske, stentorian-voiced Puritan preacher from the west of England, is the first famous name. He and his wife, both schoolteachers, had the true Sabbath pointed out to them shortly after moving to London in 1617 by Hamlet Jackson, whom Traske later ordained one of four evangelists.

But all things did not go well for long. Both Traskes were imprisoned for "Judaising" contrary to the practice of the established religion. Mrs. Traske remained in prison sixteen years till her death. Mr. Traske, at least partially, recanted (of keeping the annual feast days of the Old Testament) and was released after three years, but ever afterward—as various mentions in State papers show—continued under suspicion of Sabbath-keeping, until he also died. Perhaps the treatment he received should rightly be described as "persecution." He continued a Puritan, becoming a member of the very famous Independent (Puritan) congregation led by Henry Jacob. (Most of Jacob's people learned and determined to practice the true meaning and method of baptism, and from this congregation sprang five or six others which became the origin of the Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptists.)

After the Traskes and their small group, a few other leaders stood forth to teach, by the printed word and by example, the real Sabbath—Bourne, Tandy, Ockford, the Stennetts, etc. A Sabbatarian movement developed, which because of its association with baptism by immersion was "Baptist," though there was great diversity of belief and freedom of conscience in other doctrines. Some Sabbatarians were Calvinistic and some were not. But the diversity continued, even after their descendants eventually became known as Seventh-Day Baptists more than a century later.

Meanwhile, the Puritans as a whole remained a Sunday people and practiced infant baptism.

All the while there was persecution—both for Sabbath-keepers and Puritans. In those days it was only necessary to differ from the party in power to be persecuted. Any kind of difference in understanding was sufficient. It was for this reason that some Puritans found it preferable to flee to Holland and live in exile rather than to remain at home among people of their own language.

Some of them fled further, across the Atlantic, to found a new commonwealth and become the founding Pilgrim fathers.

But one of the ironies of the age was that the Puritans, whether in Britain or America, once they themselves were in power, were unwilling to grant to others the same religious freedom they had sought for themselves.

**Puritanism in Control.** In 1639, religious civil war broke out in Scotland. When the ensuing strife all over Britain was temporarily over ten years later, the king had been beheaded, the army was in control under its leader Oliver Cromwell, and a rubber-stamp Puritan-dominated Parliament made the laws.

Already by 1643, the Puritan Sunday "Sabbath" became the law of all the territory then under the authority of the Puritan-run Parliament. Continues the Hastings encyclopedia article quoted earlier: "The same Parliament proscribed every kind of Sunday recreation, even vainly and profanely walking for pleasure."

And further: "No recreation remained but whisky-drinking, and a great part of the drunkenness which is still [in 1917] in common in Scotland [and we may perhaps add, in the regions of Scottish settlement in the United States] may be traced to an unwise Sabbatarianism."

Among many regulatory acts, the Parliament in 1656 took care to ordain that "the Sabbath should be deemed to extend from twelve of the clock on Saturday night to twelve of the clock on Lord's-day night, and within that compass of time they prohibited all kinds of business and diversions, except works of necessity and mercy" (Neale, *History of the Puritans*, vol. 2, p. 118).

Stringent laws, with severe penalties, were enacted against all the prominent vices, such as profaneness, different forms of licentiousness, im-

pious opinions concerning God and the Bible, drunkenness, etc. Next to Sunday, one other day was most important to them, a *fast* on the last Wednesday of every month.

On the positive side, the moral character of people was much improved during Puritan supremacy. No doubt they enforced some things with too much rigor and preciseness, but laying the lusts of mankind under tangible restraint did foster the spirit of religion as well as its appearance.

Puritan political supremacy virtually ended in England in 1660. But the argument, "Which day for the Sabbath?" raged on, and the scene of further progress broadened to North America.

**The Persecuted Persecute.** The first Puritans landed in America at Plymouth in 1620. The civil government they set up had been based directly on the theocracy of the Hebrews under Moses. Gradually their Common Law became more and more rigid and all-confining. "In 1650, June 10th, the general court enacted the following: 'Further be it enacted, that whosoever shall profane the Lord's-day by doing any servile work, or any such like abuse, shall forfeit for every such default ten shillings, or be whipped.'

"In 1651, June 6th: 'It is enacted by the court that whatsoever person or persons shall neglect the frequenting of public worship of God that is according to God, in the places where they live, or do assemble themselves upon any pretense whatsoever, contrary to God and the allowance of the government . . . to pay ten shillings for every such default . . . or be whipped!'" (A.H. Lewis, *A Critical History of the Sabbath and the Sunday*, pp. 342, 343.)

"In 1652 and again in 1656, laws were passed, prohibiting Indians from hunting, working or playing on Sunday, within the limits of the colony" (*ibid.*, p. 347).

Even earlier, the Massachusetts Bay Colony operated under the following 1629 instruction from their proprietors in England: "And to the end the Sabbath may be celebrated in a religious manner, we appoint that all that inhabit the plantation, both for the general and particular employments, may surcease their labor every Saturday throughout the

year, at three of the clock in the afternoon, and that they spend the rest of that day catechising, and preparations for the Sabbath, as the minister may direct" (*ibid.*).

In the very year of the before-mentioned discussion in Massachusetts about which day was the Sabbath, the general court decreed: "That wheresoever the ministry of the Word is established, according to the order of the gospel, throughout this jurisdiction, every person shall duly resort and attend thereunto, respectively upon the Lord's-days, and

upon such public fast days and days of thanksgiving as are to be generally held by the appointment of authority" (*ibid.*, p. 348). Massachusetts colony, like Plymouth, provided penalties—fines and whippings—for Sunday absence. Similar laws were enacted in New Haven and Connecticut colonies.

No wonder, then, that Roger Williams, fleeing from Massachusetts to found Rhode Island, was soon joined by many others, and that *there* religious liberty was brought forth on the American continent.

Rhode Island became a haven for the persecuted Baptists.

To Rhode Island came Stephen Mumford in 1664 from London bringing the Saturday Sabbath, and there he persuaded others who became the first true Sabbath-keeping church in America in 1671.

Americans have a lot to be thankful for, both that the Puritans strove mightily to serve God, and that their *misguided* zeal was finally tempered so that freedom to serve God and follow his ways to the fullest degree might prevail.

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## Is Every Day "Just Like Any Other"?

"**T**omorrow's just another day since you went away; tomorrow's just another day to cry. . . ."

So goes a popular country and western song of a bygone era. And to the average person, one tiresome, monotonous day does indeed seem to melt into another.

Deeply distressed and discouraged over the death of a life-long mate, an elderly person I know lamented about how he had just spent Thanksgiving. "Just another day," he told me with tears in his eyes.

But the Creator never intended for men and women to live dry, dull, irksome, boring lives, barely eking out some sort of ersatz existence, never understanding why they draw breath on this planet of ours. He never intended life to be so hard that one depressing, trouble-filled, twenty-four-hour day was just another link on a chain into another.

King David of ancient Israel well knew that the Creator never envisioned such a dull, uninteresting existence for millions of men and women. Notice: ". . . weeping may endure for a night, but joy [a change] cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

We humans need frequent rest and deliverance from the trials and troubles that seem to result from "just living." Man needs a time free from the normal routine, a time in which to rest and reflect, to be recharged, reenergized and restored, a time to learn *why* we were put on this earth.

**The Birth of a Special Day.** The Creator designed a weekly cycle of seven days for the benefit of man. Jesus Christ of Nazareth referred to the birth of the sabbath in Mark 2:27. "The sabbath was made *for man* and not man for the sabbath," he explained.

The word "sabbath" means "rest" in the original Hebrew. Simple physical rest and refreshment after a grueling work week is an obvious reason for the Sabbath. But the true meaning and purpose of this God-ordained institution goes far beyond physical, mental and perhaps even emotional respite. For the seventh day is inextricably interwoven into God's transcendent purpose for creating man in the first place.

Genesis 1:26 explains: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . ." (KJV). When one really comprehends the fullness

of this short biblical phrase, it means that men and women are made to conform to the spiritual image and character of God—eventually actually becoming personalities in the God family.

The seventh day is a time to meditate and muse upon the reason for the whole six-day creation and especially man's part in it.

**A Brief Biblical History.** On the very first Sabbath day the Creator began to educate our first parents.

Chapters one through six of Genesis are only a brief outline of the first 1,650 years of human history. However, it is clear that the concept of the weekly cycle remained very much in the mind of the early patriarchs. Noah sent forth a dove out of the ark based on seven-day cycles (see Gen. 8:10, 12). Noah's descendant, Jacob, was also fully cognizant of the seven-day weekly cycle (Gen. 29:27, 28).

Eventually Jacob's descendants found themselves in a state of captivity in Egypt where they probably suffered religious persecution as well as political slavery. Apparently they lost the knowledge of the Sabbath and the specific day on which it fell. So the Creator reminded ancient Is-

rael of its existence, making it crystal clear not only that it fell on the seventh day, but also that Sabbath observance was a vital part of the nation's constitutional law—and especially that portion governing man's relationship to God (see Exodus 16:22-30).

**The Spiritual Import.** So important is the seventh day to God's overall spiritual plan that he placed it in the Decalogue, spoken by his own voice and written by his own finger. It is the fourth of the Ten Commandments (the first four reveal how man is to worship his Creator), and the bridge to the other six revealing the basic moral relationship between man and his neighbor.

Here is the fourth commandment "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested *the seventh day*; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it" (Ex. 20:8, 10 RSV). The Creator, here, does *not* institute the Sabbath. The first word of the commandment is "remember." In codifying the Sabbath as an integral part of his basic moral law, the Creator reminds man once again of when (at creation) and why the seventh day was given.

The Sabbath is not just any old day to God—"just like any other." It should also be a special day to man, but tragically for most it is not.

Man has been deceived into thinking that the seventh-day Sabbath was designed to be a "yoke of bondage." Unfortunately men have sometimes made it into precisely that. Such is the antithesis of God's thinking. He meant his rest day to be an occasion for feasting, joy and rejuvenation (notice Lev. 23:2-3; Isaiah 58:13, 14).

**Israel's Sabbath breaking.** In spite of all of God's revelation, much of the history of ancient Israel was an exercise in Sabbath breaking. The prophet Ezekiel records the Creator's thoughts on Israel's defiling of his holy day. "Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might *know* that I the Lord sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not walk in my statutes, but rejected my ordinances, by whose observance man

shall live; and *my sabbaths they greatly profaned*" (Ezek. 20:12-13, RSV).

After God physically disinherited both the nations of Israel and Judah for Sabbath breaking, among other reasons, the House of Judah (the Jews) finally seemed to get the point. Ezra and Nehemiah, after that nation's return from Babylonian captivity, vigorously preached and taught against Sabbath breaking.

And as humanity is wont to extremes, the Jewish nation (between the testaments) plunged headlong into the other ditch. Some of their religious leaders *added* an incredible number of dos and don'ts to the original Sabbath commandment—making it into an ecclesiastical monster. When Jesus Christ began his ministry, the time had come to strip away these sabbatical traditions *of men*. Jesus showed how the Sabbath day should be kept to fulfill its fullest spiritual intent (Matt. 5:17; Isa. 42:21). He removed the yoke of bondage that the religionists had attached to the Sabbath.

But one point is clear: Jesus Christ did keep the day itself. "And he [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16, KJV). Notice verse 31: "And [Jesus] came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them *on the sabbath days* [plural]."

**The New Testament Sabbath Rest.** Hebrews 4:9 is crucial to the

purpose of this article: "There remaineth therefore *a rest* to the people of God" (verse 9, KJV). The margin says: "There remaineth therefore *a keeping of the sabbath* to the people of God."

The Revised Standard Version has it: "There remains *a sabbath rest* for the people of God."

The Jerusalem Bible: "There must still be, therefore, a place of rest reserved for God's people, *the seventh-day rest*."

Today's English Version: "As it is, however, there still remains for God's people a rest *like* God's *resting on the seventh day*."

The vital meaning of this verse has been obscured by the King James translators. Everywhere else in chapters three and four of Hebrews the English word "rest" is translated from the Greek word *katapausin*, simply meaning "rest" or "a place of rest." However, in verse 9 the original Greek word for "rest" is *sabbatismos* which refers to an actual practicing of resting.

Verses 10 and 11: "For whoever enters God's rest [the kingdom of God] also ceases from his labors as God did from his [on the seventh day following the six working days of creation]. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience" (RSV).

God's seventh-day sabbath is not "just any other day." It prefigures the eternal rest humanity will have with God in his eternal, never-ending kingdom. □

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