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## Sabbath Observance.

For the Christian Messenger.

### DESIGN OF THE SABBATH.

A Sermon preached in Liverpool, N. S., June 15, 1862.

By Rev. Charles Tupper.

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TEXT: "The Sabbath was made for man."—Mark ii. 27.

One of the inspired servants of God has said, "His commandments are not grievous." Another states that, "In keeping of them there is great reward." They are all evidently designed and adapted to promote human happiness. In no case is this more apparent than in the appointment of a weekly Sabbath.

The Pharisees, ever disposed to watch the Saviour and His disciples invidiously, with a view to find some ground of accusation, complained of Him for relieving the distressed on the Sabbath, and of them for plucking ears of grain on that day to allay their hunger. Our Lord shewed them that it was perfectly right to perform works of mercy, and those of necessity, on the sacred day, since "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." (Luke vi. 7-10. Matth. xii. 10-12. Mark ii. 23-27. iii. 2-4.)

In contemplating the subject now before us, we may, by Divine assistance, notice:—

#### I. The design of the Sabbath.

#### II. The proper manner of keeping it.

It may be alleged, that the second part is not included in the text. If, however, the Sabbath is intended for the good of man, it is requisite that it should be properly kept, in order that the purpose for which it was appointed should be answered.

In considering the design of the Sabbath, it may be remarked:—

1. It "was made for man;" that is, obviously for the benefit of mankind in general. Such is unquestionably the import of the term "man," when employed as it is in the text, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." (Gen. vi. 3, 7.—viii. 21. Job v. 7. Jno. ii. 25.)

There are some, however, who maintain, in direct opposition to this express declaration of Christ, that the Sabbath was appointed for the Israelites only, was merely a part of their ceremonial law, and was wholly abrogated at the commencement of the gospel dispensation. In support of this view they are accustomed to cite two texts, namely, Rom. xiv. 5, 6. and Col. ii. 16, 17.

But the Jews observed many days that were distinct from the weekly Sabbath. These the Christian converts from Judaism were disposed to observe still. The Apostles did not forbid this; but they disallowed the enforcing of such observances upon converts from heathenism. (Acts xv. 5, 10, 28, 29. Gal. v. 1, 12.) On such points of difference Paul enjoined mutual forbearance. (Rom. xiv. 1-6, 13-21.) Even in our time it may be truly said of men who are perfectly agreed with reference to keeping the Lord's day, "One man esteemeth one day above another,"—as Christmas, Good Friday, &c.,—"another man esteemeth every day alike." The former may conscientiously devote these days to the service of God; while the latter, fearing that such observance will lead astray from the simplicity of the gospel, conscientiously refrains from observing them. To such a case the Apostle's language will apply, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." But as none even profess—nor am I aware that any ever did—to refrain from observing a weekly Sabbath from a principle of conscience, this passage evidently has no relation to the observance or non-observance of it.

With reference to Col. ii. 16 it should be borne in mind, that the Hebrew word *sabbath* signifies rest; and other days on which the Israelites were required to rest from secular employments, besides the one in seven, are called *sabbaths*.—Thus "sabbaths" are enjoined to be kept annually on the same day of the year; which therefore could not be the seventh day Sabbath. (Lev. xiii. 24, 25, 32, 38, 39. xix. 3, 30.) As the "sabbath-days" which the Colossians, who were converts from heathenism, were not required to keep, are coupled with Jewish rites in reference to "meats and drinks," &c., no reasonable doubt can be entertained, that these were days of rest peculiar to the ceremonial law. The Apostle cautions the Galatians against the observance of these: "Ye observe days and months. . . I am afraid of you." (Gal. iv. 10, 11.)

That the weekly Sabbath was designed, not merely for the benefit of one nation for a limited period, but for the good of mankind in all ages, is evident from the fact that it was insti-

tuted immediately after the creation of the first progenitors of the human race. "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work." (Gen. ii. 2, 3. Exod. xx. 8-11. Heb. iv. 3, 4, 9.) The recorded example of JEHOVAH in resting on this day, His specially blessing it, and sanctifying it, that is, setting it apart, from other days, clearly evince that it was to be kept as a day of rest, to be devoted to religious exercises, for man's highest good.

Accordingly, in the very brief records of the early ages of the world, we have frequent references to the reckoning of time by weeks of seven days. (Gen. vii. 4, 10. viii. 10, 12, &c.) This clearly shows that at the return of the Sabbath completed a stated and well known period of time. It was probably on this account that the term *seven* came to be regarded as a term of *perfection*.

The numerous plain vestiges of seven-day weeks, and of a Sabbath found among heathen nations, are clearly traceable to this origin. No other reasonable cause can be assigned for their existence. The fact is well established. (See Dwight's Theology, Sermon cvii.) Assuredly its testimony is strong in favor of the early institution of a Sabbath "for man."

Prior to the giving of the law on mount Sinai we find the Israelites fully aware of the sacredness of the seventh day, and therefore in order to keep it, "on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread" as usual. This course received the Divine approval. When some individuals went out to gather manna on the Sabbath, they were reprov'd, with the inquiry "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments?" (Exod. xvi. 22, 23, 28, 29.)

That it was an institution previously appointed is evident from the manner in which the fourth commandment commences—"REMEMBER the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." It would be unnatural and inconsistent to enjoin upon persons to remember what they did not know; but this injunction is both natural and common with reference to things already known. (Mal. iv. 4. Jno. xv. 20. Acts xx. 35. Jude 17.)

The rites of the ceremonial law, peculiar to the Hebrews, were privately revealed to Moses, and by him communicated to them. But the receipts of the moral law, contained in the decalogue, or ten commandments, which are obligatory upon all mankind through all ages, were distinctly uttered by JEHOVAH himself on mount Sinai, in the audience of the assembled multitude, accompanied with manifestations of the Divine presence of the most awful solemnity. They were subsequently "written by the finger of God" on two tables of stone prepared by Himself; and again in the same manner on tables which Moses was commanded to prepare. They were then deposited with the utmost care, by Divine appointment, in the most sacred place, namely, the ark of the covenant. (Exod. xix. 16-25. xx. 1-22. xxx. 18. xxxii. 15, 16. xxxiv. 1, 28. xl. 20, 21.) No sufficient reason can be assigned why the fourth of these commandments should not be regarded as equally binding upon all mankind as the others, and of equal perpetuity. It is as manifestly of a moral nature, founded on the fitness of things, as any of them. That God should be worshiped by His rational creatures, is obvious. If so, though this may be done at any time, yet it is evidently requisite that some specified time should be set apart especially for this purpose. To determine the due proportion of time required a Divine revelation. This is distinctly given in the sacred Oracles. The devotion, therefore, of every seventh day to the worship of God, is both a moral duty and a positive benefit, or revealed command. No valid reason is assignable why the Israelites should require a seventh day Sabbath, either for their physical or their spiritual benefit, more than other people.

With reference to the change of the day a few remarks may suffice. (See *Circular Letter* of the Western Baptist Association.) Those who deny the obligation to keep a Sabbath, have no right to raise an objection on this ground. The question between them and us is, not which day of the week ought to be kept, but whether or not one day in seven should be religiously observed.

The remark of the King of Zion, "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day," seems to indicate His authority to effect a change in reference to it. After He arose from the dead His disciples evidently were accustomed to assemble for worship on "the first day of the week," which was the day of His resurrection. He met with them repeatedly, and manifested Himself especially to them, on this day. (Mark ii. 28. Jno. xx. 19, 26.) At Troas, where Paul had abode six days, including the Jewish Sabbath, "upon the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread," that is for the administration of the Lord's supper; and he "preached to them," and administered the ordinance, "being ready to depart" as soon as the sacred day should be past. (Acts. xx. 6, 7.) The Apostle John, commencing his account of the revelations made to him "in the isle that is called Patmos," says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This evidently means the day of the Lord Jesus, His resurrection day. (Rev. i. 8, 10, 17, 18. xxi. 14. 1 Cor. xi. 20.) These words undeniably prove, that one day is peculiarly "the Lord's." To say that all days are alike His, is obviously evasive. All time unquestionably belongs to Him; but if all days were in every respect alike the Lord's, no man of common sense, much less an inspired Apostle, would gravely inform his readers, that a particular event occurred "on the Lord's day." This statement, therefore, furnishes irrefragable proof, that under the gospel dispensation, near the close of the first century, one particular day was recognized and declared by the Spirit of

inspiration to be especially "the Lord's day," and consequently to be devoted to His service.

2. *The Sabbath was designed for the benefit of man's body.* Man is a feeble being. He is incapable of enduring continuous toil. The night has been kindly provided for rest. But men, even those of robust constitution, become exhausted and enfeebled by labouring every day. It has, therefore, pleased our beneficent Creator, who knows what is needful for man, to appoint one day in seven to be a day of rest. Those who disregard this gracious precept, and labor on all days, while they sin against God, do themselves a great injury. In this as in other cases, "The way of transgressors is hard."

Medical men of profound knowledge and skill, and of long-continued practice, who have had ample opportunities of testing the effects upon the human system of laboring constantly, without resting on the Sabbath, give their testimony decidedly against the practice, as being ruinous to health, and destructive of life. It has been ascertained, on careful examination and extensive experiment, that men who labor only six days in a week will do more work than those who labor seven days, and do it in a better manner. (See two excellent Sermons by Rev. W. H. Humphrey, pp. 7-10.) It is evident that the law of JEHOVAH which requires us to rest one day in seven, is also a law of our nature, which can not be disregarded with impunity.

The fact is well known that laboring beasts, even if they be worked in moderation, need every seventh day for rest. If this be not allowed them, they become jaded, dispirited, and unfit for service. Accordingly, the Most High has been pleased, in kindness to them, and ultimately for man's good, to forbid the working of them on the Sabbath. (Exod. xx. 10.)

It may be asked, How then can people consistently use their horses to convey them to places of worship on the Lord's day. The Saviour has obviated this objection. He has said, "That on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." The manifest import of this is, that if the work performed by them had been done for secular purposes, it would have been a profanation of the day; but as it was done in the service of God, and in obedience to His command, it was justifiable. In country places there are many people who can not attend public worship on the Lord's day without using their horses. Consequently this use of them is proper. But no one should fail to give his horse a resting day in the course of the week. The ministers of religion in our time, like the priests of old, are obliged to labor on the sacred day, in the discharge of their spiritual duties; but they should have bodily rest on another day.

It may be remarked here, that the wisdom and goodness of God are apparent in the fixing of proportions of time for labor and for rest. All His works are perfect; and of course incapable of being improved. For instance, let any one undertake to propose an improvement in the human frame, by addition, diminution, or other alteration, and the change will be evidently disadvantageous and injurious. So it is with regard to the Divine precepts. In the case of the Sabbath this is manifest. If it occurred more frequently, in many cases there would not be sufficient time for manual labor, and attention to secular matters. If it were less frequent, the system would become exhausted, and pernicious consequences must ensue. Men are, therefore, both ungrateful and unwise if they do not acquiesce in the gracious appointment of Heaven, and rest on the Sabbath day from physical and mental toil. In numerous instances persons have notoriously destroyed either the body or the mind, or both together, as well as the soul, by their suicidal refusal or neglect to avail themselves of the blessings which the Sabbath is adapted to impart. Let others take warning and shun the fatal snare.

3. *The Sabbath is designed for the welfare of man's soul.*—Mankind are by nature "of the earth, earthy." The toils and cares of the week days have a tendency to attach them more strongly to the world. All should, indeed, worship God daily, and make vital religion the leading business of every day. (1 Cor. x. 31.) If rightly disposed, they might do so. It is, however, manifestly requisite for man's spiritual interest that he should have one day in seven expressly set apart for this purpose, that he may be exempt from secular labors and anxieties, and devote it wholly to religious exercises, and the seeking of a preparation for a better world. On this invaluable day peculiar opportunities are afforded for the diligent and profitable study of the holy Scriptures, for special prayer, for meditation on divine things, for assembling in public to wait upon the Lord, to sing His praises, and to hear the precious gospel of Jesus Christ. By these means, graciously afforded on the Lord's day, when people have leisure to attend upon them, multitudes have been brought, through Divine influence, out of a state of guilt and wretchedness, into that of grace and happiness. Those who have paid no regard to the sacred day of rest, have usually gone on in the broad way of sin and misery, "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath;" but such as have sincerely "called the Sabbath a delight," have enjoyed much sweet consolation while going to that rest [*Sabbatismos, keeping of Sabbath*] which remains to the people of God.

From the considerations now briefly adduced, it must surely be evident to every unprejudiced and rightly disposed mind, that in the most emphatical sense, nay, in every sense, "The Sabbath was made for man;" designed for his temporal and everlasting welfare.

[Conclusion next week.]