

The Seventh Day Sabbath

“According to the Commandment.”

By T.M. Preble

Originally published as a Tract (1845)

Editor’s Note: Preble was the first Adventist to advocate the Sabbath in print, and this printing led to Joseph Bates’ conversion to the Sabbath. I post it here for historical interest. The arguments are now fairly common, but in this early publication Preble does a good job of getting the main ones nailed down.

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

⁹ Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work.

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.

¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day. Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

To the Reader

The substance of the following pages, was first published in *The Hope of Israel*, Feb. 28, 1845.

Believing however as I do, the subject contained in this little Tract, to be of great importance, and wishing to do what I can, to present this truth to the true children of God; I deem it my duty to publish it in the present form, and an enlargement, that it may have as wide a circulation as possible. That the blessing of God may attend it, is the prayer of the Author. March, 1845.

A Few Questions

...for the Reader to Answer, Before Reading the Following Pages:

What authority have you in the Old or New Testament, to keep any day as a Sabbath, or day of rest: Do you find any command in the New Testament? If not, why do you not observe the day that is appointed in the 4th Commandment? Has the day ever been changed? If so, when and where? Please point to the chapter and verse.

When you were a child, did not your parents and others who taught you to keep “Sunday holy,” direct you to the “Fourth Commandment” as

authority for keeping it thus? Did you ever think of the inconsistency? The Commandment says the seventh day, and you taught to keep the first.

How could you reprove a person for working, or doing anything else on Sunday, or first day of the week, as the same law which makes it wrong to work, etc., on “God’s holy day,” commands of the seventh day, instead of the first?

The Sabbath

To The Saints Scattered Abroad

Believing it important for us to have the truth on all subjects, and especially those connected with the immediate coming of Christ, I would present a few thoughts on the Sabbath; not for controversy, but for the consideration of the true “Israel,” who are looking for the “promise,” and speedy “redemption.”

The remarks of Bro. Miller in this *Lecture on the Great Sabbath*, I like very well, because I believe they are true. In speaking of the Sabbath he says:

“Its being contained in the ten commandments, written by the finger of God, on both tables of the testimony, graven on stone, [See *Exodus* 34:28, *Deuteronomy* 4:13 & 10:4] to be a sign forever, [*Exodus* 31:17, *Ezekiel* 20:12] and a perpetual covenant, proves, in my opinion, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it is as binding upon the Christian church as upon the Jewish, and in the same manner, and for the same reason.” (Miller, *Life and Views*, p. 157)

I hope all will pay particular attention to these remarks of Br. Miller, and also my references at the bottom of the page. Again he says, p. 160, in speaking of the Sabbath as a sign,

It is a sign, because God has given it to us expressly for that purpose. See our text: “To be a sign between me and them.” i.e. between God and the children of Israel.

Now another question will evidently arise: Who are the children of Israel? I answer, while the first covenant was standing, they were the children of Jacob, descendants of the twelve tribes;—but that covenant they broke: see *Leviticus*

26:2,15 also *Deuteronomy* 31:10-16. This covenant was broken as Moses had foretold.

Then Jesus Christ brought in a new covenant which continued the sign of the Sabbath, and prepared another people, by writing his law upon their hearts. These now are the true Israel; for the changing of the subjects never did, nor ever can change the moral law of God.

Therefore Paul argues the circumcision of the heart, and says that “they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called; i.e. the which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

Now if the children of God are the true Israel, and if the Sabbath was given as a sign forever, and a perpetual covenant, I ask, how can it be abolished while there is one Israelite remaining to claim the promise?

You have evidently noticed, that all the difficulties on the Sabbath question among Christians have arisen from the foolish, Judaizing notion, that Israel meant only the literal Jew. But when we understand Israel to mean the people of God, the difficulties, every man must acknowledge, all vanish at once.

I say, and believe I am supported by the Bible, that the moral law was never given to the Jews as a people exclusively, but they were for a season the keepers of it in charge. And through them the law, oracles and testimony, have been handed down to us. See Paul’s clear reasoning in Romans, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th chapters, on this point.

Says the objector: “Then we are under the same obligation to keep the Sabbaths of weeks, month, and years, as the Jews were.”

No, sir; you will observe that these were not included in the Ten Commandments; they were attachments, added by reason of transgression, until the seed should come, to whom the promise of one eternal day or Sabbath of rest, was made.

“Therefore there remains a keeping of Sabbath to the people of God.” Only one kind of Sabbath was given to Adam, and only one remains for us: “I will cause all her mirth to

cease, her feast-days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths and all her solemn feasts.” *Hosea 2:11*.

All the Jewish Sabbaths did cease, when Christ nailed them to his cross. “Blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or the Sabbath-days; Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” *Colossians 2:14-17*.

These were properly called Jewish Sabbaths. Hosea says, “her Sabbaths.” But the Sabbath of which we are speaking, God calls “my Sabbath.” Here is a clear distinction between the creation Sabbath and the ceremonial.¹ The one is perpetual; the others were merely shadows of good things to come, and are limited in Christ.

The Sabbath which remains is to be kept on the first day of every week, as a perpetual sign, that when Christ shall have finished the work of redemption, we shall enter into that rest which remains for the people of God, which will be an eternal rest.

The sentiments expressed in the above extract, I believe to be true, *except* the closing part where it is said “The Sabbath which remains is to be kept on the first day of every week, as a perpetual sign,” etc.

Millennial Sabbath

Now, I ask, how can this be? If we keep the first day as “a sign,” I do not see how we can have our thousand year’s rest in the new earth, till the eighth thousand years, as the first day would be the eighth, reckoning in successive order from creation.

But we all as advent believers, have, and so still expect our

¹ I hope all will notice the distinction Bro. M. makes between the Jewish Sabbath, and God’s Sabbath; it is evidently true.

rest in the seventh thousand years. Therefore I think we should keep the “seventh day” as “a sign,” “according to the commandment.”

Objections

I know the reasons which are given in favor of keeping the first day, and they once satisfied me, but fail to do so now, after a thorough examination of the subject.

It is said that the resurrection of Christ, and his often meeting his disciples on the first day of the week, together with the practice of the Apostles, are sufficient reasons for observing the first day of the week.

In regard to the resurrection of Christ being on the first day of the week, I will not deny, though some may think it needs proof.

Respecting Christ’s often meeting his disciples on the first day, I think we have no positive proof that he ever met with them on this day but once when they were assembled for worship, and this we find in *John 20:19*. The gospels state:

Matthew 28

⁷ Behold he goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see him...

Mark 16

¹² He appeared unto two of them as they went into the country...

¹⁴ Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat...

Luke expresses it about the same as Mark. *Luke 24:13-15, 30, 33, and 36*. John appears to be a little more definite and says,

John 20

¹⁹ Then the same day at evening, being the first day² of the

² Let all notice that wherever the phrase, “first day of the week” occurs in the New Testament, the word day is in italics showing that it is not in the

week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst...

In the 26th verse he says, "And after eight days," etc. Not the eighth day after, as it ought to be, had Christ met with him the next first day.

In the 21st chapter, 1-3 verses we find that he met them again at the sea of Tiberius where the disciples were trying to catch fish. We see therefore, that Christ appeared to the disciples while they were "going into the country"—"as they sat at meat" and when they were "fishing," but only once when they were assembled for worship, unless their sitting at meat, or together—as the margin reads, be considered a meeting of worship.

In relation to the practice of the apostles, there is but one meeting of the disciples on the first day of the week, mentioned in the New Testament, and that is in *Acts 20:7*. But there are many meetings recorded, which they held on the Sabbath.

I know *1 Corinthians 16:2* is considered proof respecting the first day; but when examined, I think it proves the contrary. It says, "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him," etc. The expression "lay by him in store," I think plainly implies that they were at home, rather than at meeting.

Revelation 1:10, is the only other place that can be construed to favor the first day. John says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." Now, who knows whether he meant the first or the seventh day? I think the latter, because it is called "the Sabbath of the Lord your God," but the first, is nowhere called so!

original, but supplied by the Translators.

Sabbath Made for Man

In regard to the Sabbath, Christ says, “The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” Not *a* Sabbath, but *the* Sabbath. He says also,

Mark 2

²⁷ The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

²⁸ Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

He does not say, the Sabbath was made for the Jews, and a Sabbath for the Gentiles, but “the Sabbath was made for man.”—All mankind.

Some may think that our first day, is in reality the seventh, but this is settled when we examine *Matthew* 28:1, and *Luke* 23:56, & 24:1, where a plain distinction is made between the two days. Matthew says, “In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,” etc. Luke says, “And rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning,” etc.

Sabbath in the Early Church

After having examined the ancient custom in relation to the first day, we will now see what it was in regard to the seventh or Sabbath. The first passage I will notice, is the one just quoted:

Luke 23

⁵⁶ And they returned and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath day *according to the commandment*.

Acts 13

⁴² And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles³ besought that these words might be preached to them *the next Sabbath*.

³ Many say that the Jews only, observed the Sabbath; but this passage and others also, show us clearly, that the Gentiles observed the Sabbath. See Acts 18:4, on this point.

⁴⁴ And *the next Sabbath-day* came almost the whole city together, to hear the word of God.

Acts 16

¹³ And *on the Sabbath* we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made.

Acts 17

² And Paul *as his manner was*; went in unto them, & *three Sabbath-days* reasoned with them out of the scriptures.

Acts 28

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue *every Sabbath* and persuaded the Jews and Greeks.

¹¹ And he continued there a year and six months.

Now if it was Paul's "manner" to reason in the synagogue "every Sabbath," he must have in this place, observed seventy-eight Sabbaths.

It is evident that Christ had his eye on the observance of Sabbath, as late certainly as AD 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed when he said:

Matthew 24

²⁰ Pray you that your flight be not in winter, neither on the Sabbath-day.

But if this "tribulation" spoken of, has reference to the "Papal persecution," as many believe, then they were directed in the observance of the Sabbath, to a much later period.

Hebrews 4

⁴ For he spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

Not the first, but the seventh day.

Modern Acknowledgments

A few facts now, to show what those have to acknowledge who keep the first day. In *The Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, we read:

Sabbath: the Sabbath was appointed at the creation of the

world, and sanctified, or set apart for holy purposes, “for man,” for all men, and therefore for Christians; since there was never any repeal of the original institution.

To this we add, that if the moral law be the law of Christians, then is the Sabbath as explicitly enjoined upon them as upon the Jews. But that the moral law is our law, as well as the law of the Jews, all but Antinomians must acknowledge; and few, we suppose, will be inclined to run into the fearful mazes of that error, in order to support lax notions as to the obligation of the Sabbath. Into which, however, they must be plunged, if they deny the law of the Ten Commandments to be binding.

In the Address to the “Lord’s day Convention,” held in Baltimore in 1844, of which John Quincy Adams was President, we find this remark in recommending the observance of the Christian Sabbath:

“It is the law of God, co-equal with creation. It is one of the selected few of the Ten Commandments, that brief but comprehensive expression of His will.”

By these extracts, we see that the fourth commandment is acknowledged to be now binding upon us. Oh! that men were consistent. Reader, will you be? God grant that you may.

On the title page of the “Second Advent Library, No. 38,” written by S. Bliss, on *The Chronology of the Bible*, etc., we read thus:

“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.” St. Peter.

“The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” Exodus 20:10.

“I gave them my Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them.” Ezekiel 20:12.

“Which are a shadow of things to come.” St. Paul.

See what an acknowledgment this is, by Br. Bliss!

History

A word now in relation to history. As far as I have been

able to examine, during the last six months, since I became convicted on this point, I find the following to be true. The disciples evidently kept the first day of the week as a festival, in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, but never as the Sabbath.

A controversy however commenced toward the close of the first century to see whether both days should be kept, or only one; and if one should be given up, which one, the first day, or the seventh. This controversy increased century after century till A. D. 603, when Pope Gregory passed a law abolishing the seventh day Sabbath, and establishing the first day. (*Baronius' Councils*, 603)

Eusebius says of Constantine,

“That he commanded, through all the Roman Empire, that the first day of the week should be observed as a Sabbath day.” (*Eusebius' Life of Constantine*, Book 4th, Chapter 17,18)

Bampfield's Enq., Page 116, states:

“The Parliament of England met on Sundays till the time of Richard II. The first law of England made for keeping Sunday, was in the time of Edward VI, about 1470.”

In Bishop Ely's book, written 1635, he says,

“in St. Jerome's days, the devout Christians did work on the first day of the week.”

And John Calvin says,

“The Fathers put in the place of the Sabbath the day we call Sunday.” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, page 128)

Mark this! The Old Fathers did it! Not the God of heaven! Whom will we obey?

Thus we see *Daniel 7:25* fulfilled, the “little horn” changing “times and laws.” Therefore it appears to me that all who keep the first day of the week for “the Sabbath” are Pope's Sunday Keepers! and God's Sabbath breakers!!!

Truth is what I am after, and if I had but one day on this earth to spend, I would give up error for truth, as soon as I could see it. May the Lord give us wisdom, and help us to keep all...

Revelation 22

¹⁴ ...His commandments that we may have right to the tree of life.

Yours, daily looking, and patiently waiting “for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

Supplement

The word Sabbath, signifies “rest”: that of Sunday, so-called because it was dedicated to the Sun, by the heathen nations in the north of Europe. Idolatry we see in this, then.

The word Sunday, never occurs in the Bible, and in no instance is the word Sabbath applied to the first day of the week, but always refers to the seventh day.

It is said that the same portion of time which constituted the seventh day from creation, could not be observed in all parts of the earth, on account of the different degrees of latitude and longitude.

The objection, however, amounts to nothing in my land, as the Sun must rise on this continent at the same time as at the creation of the world. Therefore, though the Sun may rise at a different time in Palestine from what it does here, yet it will make no difference in the time of our beginning the Sabbath.

Genesis 1

⁵ The evening and the morning were the first day.

Therefore, we should begin the Sabbath on Friday evening, and end on Saturday evening.

The question is frequently asked, whether it would not be best now, as the practice of keeping the first day has become

so general, to continue to observe it, although it is not the true Sabbath, as a change of days would make it so difficult to manage our worldly affairs—go to meeting, etc., etc.?

This question may be easily answered by asking another, namely: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto men more than God, judge you” (*Acts 4:19*). I know by experience that there are some difficulties in the way of keeping God’s Sabbath. But what of that? This wicked world have always opposed the truth, and those who practice it, and they always will.

But for one, I had rather obey God, and have his approbation here, and finally enjoy the blessings of the new earth—though all men hate me—than to have the good opinion of men here, and perish at last. Or in other words, and in the language of another,

“I had rather go to Heaven alone, than to Hell, with the multitude.”

And as we have every reason to be daily looking for the Lord to come and call us to judgment, may the reader and the writer, *keep all the commands of God, that we may be ready for that day. Amen.*