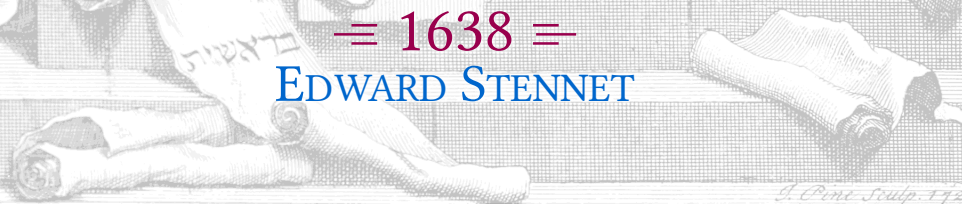




THE ROYAL LAW CONTENDED FOR

= 1638 =

EDWARD STENNET



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Foreword

Taken from the 1851 *Review and Herald* article

THE friends of the Sabbath will be interested in the remarks of Edward Stennet as a valuable relic of the past. He, says the publisher of the American edition of his work,

...was the first of the series of Sabbatarian ministers of that name, who for four generations continued to be among the foremost of the Dissenters in England.

He suffered much of the persecutions which the Dissenters were exposed to at that time, and more especially for his faithful adherence to the cause of the Sabbath. For this truth, he experienced tribulation, not only from those in power, by whom he was a long time kept in prison, but also much distress from unfriendly dissenting brethren, who strove to destroy his influence.

The Royal Law Contended For

Exodus 20

¹⁰ The Seventh Day is the Sabbath.

IF THE ten commandments be in force, every jot and tittle of them, it must necessarily follow that the seventh day is the Sabbath, and is to be observed according to the commandment. But because there is much opposition against this truth, I shall offer something in particular to it, which may tend to the clearing of it.

1. Instituted Before the Fall

It was instituted by God before the fall of man, as appears in:

Genesis 1

³¹ And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good.

But when man sinned, God changed His voice, and then the ground was cursed for his sake.¹ Farther, God was six days upon His work of creation, and rested not until the seventh day. Now, betwixt the end of the sixth day and the beginning of the seventh day, there is no interval or space of time,² then why should it be thought that the Sabbath was a shadow to hold forth rest by faith, and why should we run into such imaginations concerning the cause of God's instituting the Sabbath, seeing God so plainly declared it himself, namely, that...

Genesis 2

³ God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He rested from all His works which God created and made.

2. Following His Example

The reason that the Lord gave when He commanded the observance of the seventh day, was as before, because that...

¹ Genesis 3:17.

² Genesis 1:31; 2:2.

Exodus 20

¹¹ 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;

—and it is as a motive to provoke man to follow the Lord’s example from the beginning, both in work and rest.

⁹ Six days, [says the Lord,] you shall labor and do all your work:

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall do no manner of work.

“And if you would know a reason why you should do so, it is because I the Lord your God did so.”

And truly, to me it is clear, that one main reason why the Lord took so much time as six days to create all things in, and rested the seventh day, was to show man an example, and what he ought to do. Doubtless God could have made all things in a moment; but six days He works, and rests the seventh day, that man might do the same, and thereby not only hold forth the creating power of God, and the method that He was pleased to take in the creation, but also His great mercy in intrusting and commanding man to work six days and rest the seventh, that he might be refreshed.

3. Observed from the Beginning

It plainly appears, that this institution was in force and to be observed from the beginning, though no mention is made of the patriarchs observing it, no more than of their sacrificing and doing many other things, which it is judged that they did, notwithstanding we hear nothing of them.

But consider, God rested the seventh day and sanctified it. Now to profane that which God sanctifies doubtless is a sin; and had they done servile work upon the Sabbath, they had profaned it.³ And what the Lord said to Peter, in another case, may be rightly said in this, namely,

³ *Nehemiah 13:16-17.*

Acts 10

¹⁵ What God has sanctified, do not call common or unclean.

And the Lord, when He gave forth this command, said,

Exodus 20

⁸ Remember the Sabbath,

–to note the importance of it, and the antiquity of it, it being no new thing, but from the beginning; and that the Lord urges, in verse 11, as the cause why it was to be observed.

Israel observed the Sabbath before the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, as appears in *Exodus* 16:23, 25, 26. But mark what Nehemiah said to this:

Nehemiah 9

¹³ You came down also upon Mount Sinai, and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

¹⁴ And made known unto them your holy Sabbath.

Mark, this commandment is singled out from all the rest, and is said to be made known to them, which shows that it was in being before, though probably they might lose the observation of it, by reason of their hard bondage in Egypt. However, it is plain that they had need of the knowledge of the Sabbath, and God makes it known unto them.

And Christ leads us plainly to the first institution of it when He said,

Mark 2

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

He points to the making of it, and for whom it was made, not for the Jews only as Jews, but for man, before there was any such distinction as Jew and Gentile; and in that it was made for man, which was the public person or representative of the whole of mankind, it was made for all men, Adam standing as a public person before his fall.

4. Made for Man's Benefit

Our Lord Jesus shows the true end of God's giving the Sabbath, and also how it ought to be kept, and shows the Pharisees their mistake in the observation of it, they being so rigid that they would not suffer good works and works of mercy to be done, though there were necessity for the doing of them, as will appear if we consider the following Scriptures: The Pharisees asked Christ if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse Him,⁴ and His answer was this,

Matthew 12

¹¹ What man is there among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out?

¹² How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day.

Again, the Pharisees told Christ that His disciples did that which was not lawful, because they plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. But mind the answer of Christ,

Mark 2

²⁵ Have you not read what David did when he was a hungered [and had need],

²⁶ How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which it is not lawful for any to eat but the priest?

Matthew 12

⁵ Have you not read in the law, that the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath day and are blameless?

It was not unlawful to pluck the ears of corn when they went through their neighbor's field, for that they might do by the law of God,⁵ and that the Pharisees knew very well; but they thought it was unlawful because they did it on the Sabbath day.

But mark the answer of Christ, how He cleared the disciples; it was unlawful for David to eat the shew-bread, but he was a hun-

⁴ *Matthew 12:10.*

⁵ *Deuteronomy 23:25.*

gered and had need, and therefore to be excused. If the disciples had plucked the ears of corn when they had no need, upon the Sabbath day, it had been doing of needless work, and so had been unlawful. But the text says they were “a hungered,”⁶ therefore they might do it, it being a work of mercy as David’s was.

And the same may be said of the priests’ profaning the Sabbath, who, notwithstanding, are said to be blameless. Their preparation of the sacrifices was allowed, which work in itself would have been counted servile work, but that it was for such a merciful end, namely, the sins of the people; therefore said Christ,

Matthew 12

⁷ Had you known what this means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.

Clearly proving that the Sabbath was to be observed, (but not so as to break another command, to neglect mercy, which the Pharisees would do,) and that His disciples, in having mercy on their bodies, were no Sabbath-breakers.

Farther, observe what Christ said in:

Mark 2

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

The Pharisees made themselves slaves and bond-men by making the Sabbath a yoke, (whereas it should have been a delight⁷) by superstitious outside performances, as though man had been made for the Sabbath. But Christ tells them, it was made for man, that is, for the good and benefit of man, that he might rest from his labors and be refreshed, as they were in *Exodus* 31:17.

And thus you see how clearly our Lord has given the sense of this law. It is lawful to do well upon the Sabbath day, to visit the sick and to heal them, and to do works of mercy to our own and others’ bodies, the Sabbath being made for man.

⁶ *Matthew* 12:3.

⁷ *Isaiah* 58:13.

5. Christ is Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus Christ declares himself to be Lord even of the Sabbath day,⁸ and He takes His title thus:

Mark 2

²⁷ The Sabbath, [said He,] was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath:

²⁸ Therefore the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.

Here seems to be two things from whence Christ takes this title.

First, the Sabbath was made for man, that is, as before was said, for Adam, and so for all men, being made for him before his fall. Now, Christ being the Son of Man, the chief man, or second Adam, the man of God's right hand, the heir of all things, is of right Lord even of the Sabbath day.

Second, the Sabbath was made for man, that is, for the good of man, and in mercy to man, as is said before. Therefore, Christ being the author of all good, the giver of all mercy, He is Lord of it; and, therefore, Christ does not slight the Sabbath (as some do imagine) by saying He is Lord of it, as though He were not to keep it, or that His intent was to change it. That were to strip himself of His title, or else to entitle himself Lord of that which was not. But in that it is said Christ is Lord of the Sabbath, it proves the Sabbath to be in force.

As Christ proves the resurrection, in:

Mark 12

²⁶ I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob;

²⁷ I am not the God of the dead, but of the living;

—so Christ is Lord of the Sabbath day. He is not Lord of the dead types and shadows, or of that which is not in being, but He is Lord of the lively oracles, of which I consider the Sabbath to be one.⁹

⁸ *Matthew* 12:8.

⁹ *Acts* 7:38.

Objection: Works of Mercy

Objection. But did not Christ break the Sabbath, and teach men so to do, in bidding the impotent man take up his bed and walk, it being unlawful to carry a burden upon the Sabbath day?

Answer. The scribes and Pharisees said so, indeed, and that his bed was a burden; but they were very unfit judges, they being ignorant of the right manner of observing the Sabbath, and seeking likewise to take advantage against Christ in His words and actions. Their saying the man's bed was a burden, and that it was unlawful for him to carry it, does prove no more that it was so, than their saying that the disciples did break the Sabbath in plucking the ears of corn, and Christ in healing the diseased.

But was not this a work of mercy, the man having been lame so long in the porch now being cured? Was it not meet that he should be released from the place, and take his bed with him to lay on at night? (for it is likely he had no other.) And who can say it was a burden? In some countries that which they call a bed is no heavier than a good cloak or coat.

But consider what gross wickedness naturally flows from this opinion. The objectors themselves, and all, must acknowledge that the whole law was in force till the death of Christ—the very shadows, till He nailed them to the cross; then the fourth commandment doubtless was in force. Now, to say that Christ broke it, and taught men so, is to say that Christ sinned, and taught men to sin, (for sin is the transgression of the law,) and this roots up redemption by Christ; for if Christ was a sinner, He could not be a Saviour. He had not been a meet offering for the sins of others; He had been a sinner himself. But He was offered up a Lamb without spot,¹⁰ and was made sin for us, that knew no sin,¹¹ and therefore this objection is made so gross, that every sincere heart that sees the tendency of it will not touch it; and indeed I had not mentioned it here, but that many through weakness have taken it

¹⁰ *Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19.*

¹¹ *2 Corinthians 5:2.*

up as a sufficient ground to prove the making void of the Sabbath, for want of looking into the bottom of it.

6. Christ's Counsel in Matthew 24

Another ground to prove the Sabbath yet to be in force, may be taken from the words of Christ to His disciples in:

Matthew 24

²⁰ But pray that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day;

—which is part of the answer Christ gave them when they came privately to Him to ask Him when the destruction of the temple should be, the signs of his coming, and the end of the world. It is generally conceived that this part of Christ's answer relates to the destruction of Jerusalem; and, indeed, that is the shortest time that can be thought it relates to, as appears by the question which was asked Him.

But suppose it to be so; does it not plainly appear from hence, that the Sabbath was to remain in full force after the death of Christ? The destruction of Jerusalem was about forty years after the death of Christ, and yet He commands His disciples to pray that their flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.

Now, can we think that Christ would lay such a foundation for superstition, as though the Sabbath was to be at the ruin of Jerusalem, when it was to cease at His death? Or can we think that Christ would teach His disciples to pray false, or to pray that their flight should not be on the Sabbath, when indeed there was to be no Sabbath? This is gross to imagine; for as sure as winter was to remain winter, so the Sabbath was to remain the Sabbath. And if their flight had been upon it, it would have been the more tedious, it being a day of rest and refreshment to them, wherein they used to rejoice and praise the Lord, as appears by that song for the Sabbath day, in *Psalms* 92.

But although this Scripture looks to the destruction of Jerusalem, yet I conceive that it looks farther.

7. Example of the Disciples

Another ground is taken from the practice of Christ's disciples after His death, as recorded in:

Luke 23

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

Some say, that if we do observe the Sabbath, we must do all those sacrifices which the Jews did upon it. But at this time the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, and the shadows were done away by the body of Christ, and yet they kept the Sabbath, not through fear or ignorance, but according to the commandment, which is to rest from their labors; and so they did, for the text says,

⁵⁶ They returned...and rested.

There is no sacrifice expressed in the commandment.

Exodus 20

¹⁰ But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates.

The stranger and the cattle were to rest on the Sabbath. So that the Sabbath was commanded and observed before any of those sacrifices were commanded to be offered upon it. But because the Jews did such a service upon the Sabbath day, as they were a typical people, it does not follow that this was any part of the commandment; and therefore we are to rest, as those disciples did, according to the commandment.

It is remarkable, that the Holy Ghost should leave this thing upon record, which would not have been, I am persuaded, had the Sabbath been then abolished. He does not only say, "they returned...and rested on the Sabbath day," but, to prevent all mistakes, lest it should be thought they did it ignorantly or supersti-

tiously, or for fear of the Jews, He says they did it groundedly, that is, “according to the commandment.”

Objection: Meeting on the First Day

Objection. But the disciples were met together upon the first day of the week, and Christ appeared unto them.¹²

Answer. It is true, they were assembled together upon the same day at even, being the first day of the week, with the door shut; and the cause is laid down why they were so, namely,

John 20

¹⁹ ...for fear of the Jews.

Some of the disciples, as I said before, kept the Sabbath the day before, and I think we cannot reasonably imagine but that those did who were together on the first day, for they did frequently correspond together, that is manifest.

But what does their being together on the first day evening, and Christ’s appearing to them, prove for the observation of the first day, more than His appearing to them eight days after, and appearing to them the third time early in the morning when they were fishing,¹³ for the observation of those days? It was necessary that Christ should appear to His disciples on the first day of the week, that His word might be fulfilled of His rising the third day, so that they might boldly witness the same.

Objection: Breaking Bread on the First Day

Objection. But the disciples came together on the first day of the week, and did break bread, and Paul preached unto them.¹⁴

Answer. This is all the meeting or preaching that ever we find held upon the first day, except the disciples being together “for fear of the Jews,” mentioned before, at evening. So this seemed to be, because when they came together Paul preached with them,

¹² John 20:9.

¹³ John 24:4-5.

¹⁴ Acts 20.

continuing his speech until midnight. It is not likely, then, that they observed the day and came together in the morning, seeing he continued his speech so long.

And, as we have the cause of the disciples being together with their doors shut, so we have the cause of this meeting. Paul was ready to depart on the morrow upon an extraordinary occasion, and he had many things to communicate to them, as appears by his discoursing with them till midnight, and talking till break of day.

But that which makes the objectors lay such stress upon this text, is because the disciples came together to break bread, which they judge to be the Lord's Supper. Suppose it were so, what does this make for the observation of the first day, more than Christ's first instituting the Supper upon the fifth day of the week, (as is generally conceived,) does make for the observation of it?

But we have no proof that this was the Supper of the Lord that they came to partake of, but it seems to be such breaking of bread as the margin of some Bibles refers to.

Acts 2

⁴⁶ They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness of heart.

So in *Luke* 24:30, 35. And it is explained what kind of breaking of bread it was, where it is said, when He was risen up again, and had broken bread and eaten, and talked a good while, till break of day, he departed. Here is eating and talking; it is not solemnized as the Lord's Supper. Some would have this common breaking of bread, and the other in *Acts* 20:7, to be the Lord's Supper; but it is very unlikely that there should be two sorts of breaking of bread at one time, by the same persons, and yet nothing spoken distinctly by which we might know the one from the other. The most that can be said, is but a supposition; it cannot be proved that this was the Lord's Supper.

How weak a ground this is for the observation of this day as a Sabbath, or more than any other day, or to limit the administration of the Lord's Supper to this day, I leave to the truly wise in heart to judge.

Objection: Collections on the First Day

Objection. But the church had their gatherings upon the first day of the week, by which it appears that it was the day that they met together upon.¹⁵

Answer. The words are these,

1 Corinthians 16

² Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Here is no proof of their meeting together, but rather the contrary, every one was to lay by him in store as God had prospered him; no public gathering, but private laying up. But because the Apostle said, in the close of the verse, "that there be no gatherings when I come," therefore it is thought that the Scriptures cannot be so understood, because it would not prevent gatherings.

But is this fair, when a text of Scripture stands alone, to put such a sense upon it as does contradict the very letter of it—when it says, "let every one of you lay by him in store," then to say the meaning is to have public gatherings and but one store? And would not the end of the Apostle be fully answered, namely, to have no gatherings, if each of them did lay by in store, as God had prospered them in the world, ready against the Apostle came, they knowing of his coming?

And when he came, was it not as easy to carry it with them to him, as for us to carry our Bibles to a meeting; and what need would there be then of gatherings? And this way of giving would not be Pharisee-like, but according to the words of Christ, in:

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Matthew 6

¹ Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise you have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

³ But when you do your alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does:

⁴ That your alms may be in secret; and your Father which sees in secret himself shall reward you openly.

Objection: In the Spirit on the Lord's Day

Objection. But John was in the spirit on the Lord's day, (and had the various revelations upon it,) which is conceived to be the first day of the week.¹⁶

Answer. It is true, John was in the spirit on the Lord's day. But the question will be, what day that was. If any particular one of the seven, it must have been the Sabbath, for no other day is so called but that. God calls it His holy day in *Isaiah* 58:13; and Christ says He is Lord even of the Sabbath day. And if so, then it is His day, for He is Lord of it, and that by way of eminence: not, as some would have it, to show that He is Lord of every day, but as it is the Sabbath; for so it is said the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day. So that this notion that the Lord's day is the first day, is merely taken up on trust one from another, without one word of Scripture to prove it.

Objection: Ceremonial Sabbaths

Objection. But it will be yet objected, by those that are for no Sabbath, in the words of the Apostle in:

Colossians 2

¹⁶ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect to an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days:

¹⁷ Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ;

¹⁶ *Revelation* 1:10.

–whence it is concluded that the Sabbath was but a shadow, and none are to be judged for not observing it.

Answer. There were holy-days and sabbaths besides the seventh-day Sabbath, or the Sabbath of the Lord your God, for it is so called in the commandment, as does appear in *Leviticus 23:39*. Now, because it is implied by the words of the Apostle, that sabbaths were shadows, to be done away by the body of Christ, does it therefore follow that all Sabbaths were so, any more than the words of the Apostle that men shall be saved, prove that all men shall be saved?

And if we consider the verses before, it will plainly appear, that the Apostle was not speaking of any of the ten commandments. In verse 15, the Apostle is speaking to the Gentiles, showing how they were dead in sins, and in the uncircumcision of their flesh, but are now quickened by Christ, and all their trespasses forgiven them. In verse 14, he shows what farther benefit they had by the death of Christ, blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us, and contrary to us, He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and the Scripture on which the objection is founded has its dependence upon that which comes in with,

Colossians 2

¹⁶ Therefore let no man judge you in meats, and drinks, etc.;

–as though the Apostle had said,

“Forasmuch as Christ has blotted out and nailed to His cross those ordinances which are against the Gentiles, you are not to be judged for the non-performance of them.”

Now the ten commandments were never against the Gentiles, nor contrary to them; for the same Apostle says the matter of them was written in their hearts, as was said before, and they did by nature the things contained in them, and therefore they were not contrary to them.

But circumcision and other ordinances stood as a wall against the Gentiles, which Christ broke down, by taking them out of the way and nailing them to the cross,

Ephesians 2

¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

¹⁶ That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

So that it is clear, that the Apostle is speaking of such commandments as were contained in ordinances, and not those commandments that were eminently distinguished from ordinances: but those ordinances which were against the Gentiles, and made them and the Jews two, as did drinks, new moons, holy-days, and sabbath-days, Christ by His blood having taken these away, has made them one.

That the ten commandments should be struck at, there is no cover in this Scripture for, or that the Sabbath should only be taken from them and nailed to the cross with new moons, meats, and other shadows and ordinances which were against man. But Christ said, "The Sabbath was made for man." So that in this place there is no proof for the abrogation of this command of God. But for a more full answer see my other book.

Objection: The Shadow and the Substance

Objection. "You observe days, and years, and times and months; I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." *Galatians* 4:10-11.

Answer. This cannot be understood that the Apostle here strikes at the mere observation of days, a thing of such dangerous consequence, for he would not have them judged that observed one day above another. In *Romans* 14:5-6, and in this place, he himself judges these as persons that had so far degenerated, that he was afraid he had bestowed upon them labor in vain; but it is manifest

that these Galatians were gone back to circumcision, and so were debtors to the whole law, seeking justification thereby.¹⁷

So they observed days and years, according to the law that was a shadow of good things to come, solemnizing the days, and months, and years, with those things that were appointed for them, as burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, the waving of the sheaf, the Passover, and Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the like, as may be seen at large in *Leviticus 23:8-11*; for they could not be said to observe times, and months, and years, according to the law, except they did such service. And this gave the Apostle just ground to fear that he had bestowed on them labor in vain.

But to imagine that to observe the Sabbath according to the commandment, or to observe a day voluntarily to the Lord, is so dangerous, is contrary both to Scripture and reason.

Objection: Entering into God's Rest

Objection. We who believe are entered into rest, of which the Sabbath was but a type, as appears by the words of the Apostle in *Hebrews 4:3*.

Answer. If eternal rest by faith be the antitype of the Sabbath, the Sabbath ceased to be in force to every man so soon as he believed; which is ridiculous to think, and contrary to the current of Scripture. But the Apostle says,

Hebrews 4

¹⁰ We who believe do enter into rest; for he that is entered into his rest is ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

¹¹ Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the example of unbelief.

Mind this chapter well, and I am persuaded you will see that the drift of the Apostle, in mentioning the seventh day here, is but to amplify and set forth that perfect rest which they that believe do and shall enjoy, of which the land of Canaan was but a type;

¹⁷ *Galatians 5:2-4.*

and to show that God's rest was before the land of Canaan, and that there yet remains a rest to the people of God.

As God did rest the seventh day from all His works, so they that enter into rest do cease from their own works, as God did from His. And this is not as soon as men believe, for the Apostle provokes himself and others which were believers to labor to enter into it.

And therefore, if you will have the Sabbath a type from this Scripture, though it is nowhere so called, it must be a type of eternal rest, which saints do enter into when they cease from their own works, as God did from His. And that will not be till they lay down this tabernacle, which will not affect the thing asserted.

And indeed I cannot deny but the Sabbath is an earnest of that rest, and saints that are spiritual in the observation of it find it so, and of great use to put them in mind of that glorious rest, as the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper put us in mind of the sufferings of Christ; so this being a day of rest and delight, being striped of all worldly incumbrances, and devoted to the Lord, to pray unto Him, and to praise His holy name, to meditate upon heaven and heavenly glory.

Objection: The Penalty of Law-Breaking

Objection. But many say, "If the Sabbath be in force, then the penalty must needs be so, and then those that do not keep it must be stoned;" therefore this opinion is dangerous, and will lead saints to destroy one another.

Answer. This is a very showy objection, but indeed it is a very weak one. I do not find that any more than one was stoned, and it was for presumptuous breaking of the Sabbath. But suppose that penalty be in force; every saint is not a magistrate to put it in execution. If a saint should kill a man, saints as they are saints are not to execute him; all that they can do is to endeavor his repentance, but it belongs to the true magistrate to inflict the punishment.

The penal laws of God take hold of presumptuous sinners, not for sins of ignorance, and therefore it is not to be thought that any punishment will be inflicted upon any for a breach of the Sabbath till it be universally acknowledged. So then, if God has annexed the penalty of death to the breaking of it, doubtless it will be just.

But we find in Nehemiah's time, that although they had made a market-day of the Sabbath, treading of wine-presses, lading of asses, and selling of all manner of provisions upon it, yet he does but contend with them. He contends with the Jews of Jerusalem, the nobles of Judah, and the men of Tyre, but inflicts no punishment on either.¹⁸

But what a strange thing is this, that men should count it a dangerous opinion, to hold that the Sabbath is in force, because of the penalty! Suppose it to be so; the same may be said of the rest of the commandments. For instance, the first commandment is,

Exodus 20

³ You shall have no other gods before me;

—he that worshipped a strange god was to be put to death. Now, shall we not own this commandment, because the breakers of it were so punished? Again,

Genesis 9

⁶ He that sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.

Now, is there any danger in the owning of this commandment,

Exodus 20

¹³ You shall do no murder,

—because the punishment is in force? Again, the fifth commandment is,

¹² Honor your father and your mother,

¹⁸ *Nehemiah* 13:15-17, 21.

–but he that cursed father or mother was to be put to death. Now, shall we not honor father and mother, and so shall we break this commandment, because this punishment belongs to the breakers of it?

So this objection is of no weight or use at all, except it be as a bear-skin put upon the truth to frighten children away, lest they should look into it.

Objection: No Command in the New Testament

Objection. But we do not find any of the apostles urge this commandment in any of their epistles, namely, that the Sabbath day should be observed.

Answer. Neither do we find the apostles urging the first, second, or third commandment in particular, as laid down in the table, but they are frequently urged in the general, as in *Romans* 7:12-13; 8-10, and generals comprehend particulars. James says,

James 2

¹⁰ Whosoever shall keep the whole law, yet offend in one point, is guilty of all;

–and he proves it thus,

¹¹ Because he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill; now, if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law.

The same argument may be drawn from the thing in hand. He that said, “Do not commit adultery,” said also, “Keep the Sabbath”; now, if you commit no adultery, yet if you break the Sabbath, you are become a transgressor of the law. And Paul said,

1 Corinthians 7

¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

John said, in his first epistle, chapter 5:2-3,

1 John 5

² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.

And if the apostles had not spoken a word to this commandment, in general or in particular, it is no ground for us to lay it by, except the observation of it were forbidden, because it is so plainly commanded by God, explained by Christ, observed by His disciples, both before and after His death, as was said before, and will farther appear by and by.

Objection: Practice of the New Testament Church

Objection. But we do not find that any of the churches kept the Sabbath.

Answer. That is no proof that they did not keep it. But it is clear that the church of Jerusalem kept it, though it is not plainly expressed, for they were so zealous for the very customs, that Paul is counseled to purify himself, lest they should be offended at him.¹⁹ Now, if they were for the observation of those things that were but shadows, there is no doubt but they were very strict for the observation of the Sabbath. And there was such offence taken against Paul for preaching against circumcision and the customs, that we need not question, if the Sabbath had been preached against, but we should have heard a great noise of it in the Scriptures, and seen strong convincing reasons why it was abolished.

And it is as clear that the apostles kept the Sabbath after the resurrection of Christ as before.

Acts 13

¹⁴ Paul went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down.

¹⁵ And after the reading of the law...

¹⁹ Acts 21:21, 24.

–preached the gospel, and told them of the ignorance of those that dwelt at Jerusalem of the voice of the prophets which were “read every Sabbath day” (verse 27).

Acts 13

⁴² ...and the Gentiles besought him that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.

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

So that it is clear, that the Sabbath was Paul’s resting-day and preaching-day, both to the Jews and Gentiles, that being the day that the Gentiles used to hear; and though they had a desire to hear the same words again, yet it must be next Sabbath; and Paul fulfills their desire and preaches to them the next Sabbath, and almost the whole city came to hear. Can we think, if there had been no Sabbath, that Paul would have countenanced them so in their ignorance? Or, if the first day had been a day that was observed, would he not have told them so, that they might have heard the word before the next Sabbath.

And when Paul came to Philippi, a Gentile city, mind what is said in:

Acts 16

¹² We were in that city abiding certain days.

¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was want to be made, and we sat down and spoke unto the women that resorted thither.

The seventh day has its title still, as is said by the Spirit in *Acts*; speaking of certain days, this is singled out and called the Sabbath day, with an account how they spent it, and the blessing they received upon it; they resorted to the place of prayer, and there they preached, and the Lord opened Lydia’s heart to attend to the words of Paul.

And in *Acts* 17:2, it is said,

Acts 17

² That Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.

And when Paul came to Corinth, which was a Gentile city, and found Aquila, a Jew, and his wife Priscilla, and because they were of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought, for by occupation they were tent-makers,

Acts 18

⁴ He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath day, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks.

So that it is manifest, that the Greeks kept the Sabbath as well as the Jews, and that though Paul wrought at his trade and made tents, yet he rested every Sabbath day; and as we have an account how he spent his time, namely, in working at his trade, so we have an account how he spent his time on the Sabbath.

Now, if it be such a strong argument for the observation of the first day, because Paul preached upon it once; what is this for the observation of the seventh day, that Paul did not only preach constantly upon it, but wherever the Spirit speaks of it He calls it the Sabbath day, without the least hint that He did so out of condescension to the weakness of others?

And let it be shown by the Scriptures that the apostles did countenance and own any shadow that was done away, as they owned and countenanced the keeping of the Sabbath, and we may follow the apostles as they followed the Lord in this matter, though we have no express word that the churches kept it.

And, indeed, I think I may say in this case, as the Apostle said in another, that it would have been superfluous for the apostles to have told any people in their time that such and such a church kept the Sabbath; it being a truth not so much as questioned, that we hear of, but Jews and Gentiles both observed it.

