

## The Object of the Sabbath

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The Signs of the Times : September 11, 1893

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27. The Pharisees had laid down rigid rules as to how the Sabbath should be kept. There was no allowance for difference in circumstances, but these rules were to be carried out by everybody on every occasion. Being only human rules they could not be adapted to the condition of men. With them the Sabbath was of their own making, not the Sabbath of the Lord, it was everything and man was nothing. It was far better in their eyes to let a man die than to do anything for his relief on the Sabbath day. Thus they made the Sabbath a burden, whereas God gave it to man for a blessing.

The Savior’s statement that the Sabbath was made for man does not at all convey the idea that it is a plaything for man; that man can do as he pleases with it; but it does show that it is designed for man’s welfare. Man’s welfare is the great consideration. It is man that God cares for. He has not made institutions and arbitrarily commanded man to keep them, so that it makes no difference what the man may suffer, if only the institution be preserved intact. God is not a tyrant. It is true that he has made institutions, the Sabbath among them, and that he designs that they shall be kept; but only because the keeping of them is beneficial for man. God in his wisdom has devised such institutions that the observing of them just as he has commanded, is the only way in which man can attain the highest good, and experience its fairest blessings.

“The Sabbath was made for man.” Mark well the fact that this statement by the Saviour did not introduce a new order of things. He did not say that the Sabbath which God gave in the beginning had been a hard yoke, but that he had come to modify it, so that men might do with it as they chose, keeping it if convenient, and dispensing with it if they saw fit. No, “the Sabbath was made for man.” When God gave it to man in Eden, as well as when he spoke the fourth commandment upon Mount Sinai, it was designed as a blessing for mankind. God, who made man, knew what he needed, and in the Sabbath he gave him that which would lift him to the original possible place.

It is true that Christ did tear away from the Sabbath the senseless and burdensome restrictions that the Jews had placed upon it, by which the Sabbath was broken instead of kept; but in so doing he merely let the institution shine forth just as God gave it. He did not in the least remove any of the sanctions, which had been thrown around it by the Lord, for Christ “came not to destroy.” Men cannot make a rule so broad and comprehensive that it can cover every possible case; in every law of man there must be exceptions or else someone must suffer. But not so with God’s law, he knew how to make laws and institutions that would be applicable in every case, and yet work injustice to none. There cannot be any circumstances in which it is not the duty of man to keep the Sabbath day; yet in no case will the keeping of it work injury to anyone. On the

contrary, it is only in the keeping of the Sabbath that the greatest blessings come to man.

“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.” Genesis 2:3. God does not ask man to make the day holy; he did that himself. God blessed the seventh day. It is asked, “How could God bless a day, so that it would be any more holy than another day?” That we cannot tell. One might as well ask us how God could create the world. We know nothing about how the thing was done; all we know is the fact. Of that we are very sure, because the Bible tells us. The seventh day, —not simply the Sabbath institution, —is blessed. It and it alone, of all the days of the week, has a blessing placed upon it. It is different from all the other days of the week. Therefore in the keeping of the Sabbath there is a blessing to be found.

We do not mean that people may not be blessed upon other days of the week, for not only the Christian, but even the ungodly, will receive blessing from God on very day of the week. The Christian may, and often does, receive a large measure of the Spirit on any working day; but all that does not take the blessing of the Sabbath. On the seventh day, which it is observed as God designs, there is a blessing to be obtained that cannot be obtained on any other day.

It is quite commonly taught that if men keep another day than the seventh, they will experience the same blessing. As evidence of this, we are told by strict observers of the first day of the week that they have all the blessings on that day that they could possibly have on the seventh day. But this they cannot know, because they have never kept the seventh day. That they do experience something in their worship need not be denied, but that they do not experience the blessing of the Sabbath, is as sure as the Bible.

The reason why is very simple. *A thing can never be found where it is not.* A man cannot be found in London if he is in Liverpool. One may go to the Cape of Good Hope in search of the North Cape, but he will never find it there. He will find a cape, but it will not be the North Cape. Now the Lord has blessed the Sabbath day, the seventh day. He has never blessed any other day. The blessing, which he placed on the seventh day in the beginning, has never been taken off. It could not by any possibility be taken off. Therefore if one wants to find the blessing of the Sabbath day he must find it in the keeping, according to the commandment, of the seventh day. Many will not believe this; they think that it is foolish to suppose that there is any difference in days. But whoever tries it, not in form merely, but in Spirit, keeping in reality the Sabbath of the Lord, will know that it is so.

It was Christ who blessed and sanctified the seventh day. Since it was by him that all things were created, it is evident that he must also have rested at the close of the six days of creation. He created, he rested, he blessed, and he sanctified. Therefore the blessing of the Sabbath day is the blessing of Christ. The blessing of Christ is to turn man away from iniquity. Acts 3:26. The Sabbath, therefore, is for the purpose of turning man away from their sins—not simply from the sin of Sabbath breaking, but from all sin.

How can this be? A few words will indicate the answer, which will be treated further in another paper.

The Sabbath is the memorial of creation. The Sabbath was made for the reason that in "six days the Lord made heaven and earth and all that in them is." Exodus 20:11. And from the fact that every day man may see something of the works of the Creator, the Sabbath is given for the especial purpose of keeping God in mind as the great Creator. But for the Sabbath rest, men would forget God. And forgetting God, they fail to avail themselves of his power, in overcoming sin. So we have the words of the Lord as to why the Sabbath was given: "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." Ezekiel 20:12. God sanctified the Sabbath for man that man might know that he is the One that sanctifies from sin.

It was Christ that blessed the Sabbath, and sanctified it, so that the seventh day is the Lord's Day. The blessing of the Sabbath is the blessing of Christ, and that is sanctification, for Christ is "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. Here again we see that the Sabbath means sanctification.

The Sabbath is the memorial of creation, but redemption is creation. David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart." Psalm 51:1. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." 2 Corinthians 5:17. The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation," (Romans 1:16), and the power of God is seen only in the things that he has made. Verse 29. So the power of the gospel is the power that created the worlds. Therefore, the Sabbath, in commemoration of creation, makes known to man the power of God to save from sin. As it calls to remembrance the power of God as shown in the works of his hands, it reminds us of the words of the apostle: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10

This, and this alone, is the object of the Sabbath. This object can be gained only by the keeping of the Sabbath in just the way that God designed from the beginning that it should be kept.