

The Sabbath and the Cross

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We have in another article seen that the Lord's Day, according to the Bible, which is our only guide, is the seventh day of the week. And yet very many people do not so regard it, because they think that in some way the crucifixion of Christ made a change in the day. It ought to be sufficient to say that while the Lord with His voice from Sinai called the seventh day His day, afterwards claiming the Sabbath as His day, through Isaiah, and while the Lord Jesus Christ declared Himself to be Lord of the day which the Jews professed to regard sacred, He never gave even so much as a hint that any other day was His special day. No other day was ever called His day; but all the other days of the week are classed under the general head of "the six working days." The least that should be expected of one who claims Sunday for the Lord's day, is that He should show from the Scriptures as plain a declaration to that effect as there is for the seventh day.

But leaving this negative argument, let us see exactly what relation there is between the cross of Christ and the Sabbath.

In the first place we find that the Sabbath was given to man at the close of the creation of the earth, before the fall. It is an institution of Eden. See the second chapter of Genesis. Therefore the keeping of it as it was given, must bring something of Eden into this wicked world.

It was given to commemorate creation completed. "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. "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." Exodus 20.11. And so when the psalmist says that the work of the Lord is honorable and glorious, he adds, "He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered." Psalm 111.3, 4. How has He made His wonderful works to be remembered? By giving the Sabbath. That which causes a thing to be remembered is a memorial; and so we have the plainer and more literal rendering of the last text, "He hath made a memorial for His wonderful works."

There is another thing that dates back at least as far as the Sabbath, and that is the crucifixion of Christ. We read of Christ that He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13.8. Therefore the Sabbath and the cross run parallel through the history of the world, and it is certain that the hanging of Christ upon the cross of wood, in the sight of men, could make no difference with the Sabbath. Any effect that the cross was to have upon the Sabbath must have been seen in the very beginning; but it is certain that since the crucifixion of Christ was only the continuation of a thing that had taken place at least four thousand years before, it could make no change in the Sabbath which had existed all that time in connection with it.

THE POWER OF GOD

The Sabbath, as we have seen, is the memorial of the wonderful works of God. But the power of God is clearly seen in the things which He has made, and God expects all men to see His power in them; for He holds all men inexcusable if they do not know His eternal power and Godhead. "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and Divinity; that they may be without excuse." Romans 1.20, R.V. Now the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Verse 16. Therefore since the power of God is seen in the things that He has made, and the Sabbath is the memorial of His works, it is evident that the Sabbath is the great Gospel memorial. In and through it we learn the power of Christ to save.

The cross of Christ is also the power of God. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1.18. Therefore since the Sabbath and the cross of Christ both show forth the same power of God, it is evident that not only are they parallel, but that they are most intimately connected. The connection is shown in the following passage of Scripture: —

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature; for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." Colossians 1.12-17. That is to say, that Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, is the one through whose blood we have redemption, because by Him all things were created. Instead of "by," in verse 16, we should have "in," the same as in verse 14. The Revised Version so gives it; and we have the truth set forth before us more clearly that we have redemption in Christ, because all things were created in Him, and all things exist in Him.

Christ shed His blood on the cross; and through that we have redemption. But this is so only because all things were created in Him. Therefore the Sabbath, which is the memorial of God's works, may show forth identically the same thing that the cross of Christ sets forth to us. It shows the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. For redemption is creation. "For 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." Ephesians 2.8, 9. (See also Psalm 51.10; 2 Corinthians 5.17)

THE POWER OF THE LIFE

Creation and redemption are the same, and the Sabbath and the cross are so intimately connected, because both are alike manifestations of the life power of Christ. He is the first-born of every creature, or of all creation. In Him all things were created. He is the beginning, the head or source, of the creation of God. Revelation 3.14. In Him they were

created. In Christ all things existed from the days of eternity, just as surely as they did after He by His word made them to appear. All things spring from His life. In the life of the things that are made, we see the life of Christ. "In Him all things consist." "In Him we live, and move, and have are being." Acts 17.28

But it is by the life of Christ that we are saved. Romans 5.10. The blood is the life, and we have redemption through His blood. On the cross Christ shed His blood, or poured out His life for man. The preaching of the cross is the power of God, because it is the preaching of the giving of the life of Christ for our salvation. But that life which was given for us on the cross, is the life from which all creation sprung. Therefore the cross of Christ brings to us the creative power, which is commemorated by the Sabbath. "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid." Galatians 3.21. So the Sabbath of the Lord, instead of being opposed to the Gospel of Christ, is the very heart of that Gospel.

We often hear about the cross involved in the keeping of the Sabbath. By this is meant the loss of employment or possibly of friends, etc. for it is a fact that to very many there seems to be nothing ahead of them but starvation, if they begin to keep the Sabbath of the Lord. Then, too, people who do so peculiar a thing as to keep the seventh day of the week, are often despised, and deemed almost insane. All these things are naturally trying to a person's feelings. And so Sabbath keeping is called a cross that is hard to bear.

How little those who speak of it in that manner realise what the cross is. There is more truth in what they say about the Sabbath and the cross, than they think; but how different! The Apostle Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Galatians 6.14. The cross of Christ, therefore, is something to glory in. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Hebrews 11.26. It is by the cross that the Lord gives to us His life, by which we are saved; and therefore the glory of the cross is the joy of salvation.

We are reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and saved by His life. The life which does this, is the life from which all created things came, and by which they exist. The power of redemption is the power of creation, and that is the power of the life of Christ. The Sabbath is a great memorial of the wonderful works of God, which are the measure of His graciousness. He gave it that we might know that He is the Lord that sanctifies us. Therefore as the cross of Christ brings joy and celebration, so the cross of the Sabbath is not a cross hard to be endured, but a cross that lifts up and saves. Instead of mourning over the difficulties involved in keeping the Sabbath, we say with the psalmist, "For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work; I will triumph in the works of Thy hands." Psalm 92.4