

Dr. Munhall on the Sabbath

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We had the pleasure one day last week of listening to a "Bible-reading" on the Sabbath question, given by Dr. L. Munhall, the evangelist who has been holding revival services in San Francisco for several weeks. It was advertised to be a Bible-reading, but was, in fact, a short sermon, with a few more Scripture quotations that are usually heard in the popular modern sermon. The "reading," however, was more pointed and interesting than any other Sabbath study we ever heard from a first-day preacher.

The Doctor began by saying that the law of the Sabbath was given long before Mount Sinai. He quoted Exodus 16:25, 26: "And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord; to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." "These words," said the speaker, "indicate that the Sabbath was not first given at Sinai, but was kept before. The law of the Sabbath is as old as creation. The Fourth Commandment found in Exodus 20:8-11, connects itself with what was said at the first, recorded in Genesis 2:1-3, and makes good the law that obtained among God's people even before the thunders of Sinai. The Sabbath was the seventh day of creation."

In the above paragraph we have given the exact expressions of Mr. Munhall. No one could have made a better statement on the case, for it is the exact truth. The speaker then read the following texts:

"Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in plowing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." Exodus 34:21

"Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord; whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death." Exodus 35:2

"These," said Mr. Munhall, "are explicit statements with reference to the Sabbath law. We are to cease on the Sabbath from our usual daily employments. The Sabbath is to be a day of rest. It is not to be spent in idleness, sleeping half the forenoon, eating a big dinner, and taking a buggy ride in the afternoon. Rest doesn't mean idleness. But the Sabbath is to be spent in work for God, because it was hallowed by him."

The Doctor then read Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15, as another point on the way the Sabbaths should be kept. They read thus: "And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath, or on the holy day; and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt." "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of

burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.”

On these texts the following strange comments were made: “This touches a point that needs to be noted by Christian people. Some of you will send your children to market on Sunday morning for meat. Or you will step into a cigar store, or stop and get a glass of soda on your way home from church on Sunday. But you will say, ‘Suppose I should forget to get my beefsteak on Saturday night; will it not be necessary to get it on Sunday morning?’ You have no business to forget. If you do forget, you must go without. Every desire of a heart and stomach is not to be gratified at the expense of God’s law. If your grain will spoil if you don’t work on Sunday, then lose your grain. If you are a produce dealer, and your provisions will spoil if you don’t work on Sunday, then use your provisions. Obey God.”

To the last sentence in the above paragraph we can hardly subscribe. So we could to all the rest, if the speaker had used the word Sabbath instead of Sunday. He had previously said that the seventh day was set apart at creation, and that was kept by the people of God before the commandment for its observance was given upon Mount Sinai. Of course the seventh day must have been kept by God’s people after the specific law for its observance had been given amid the thunders of Sinai; and this is allowed by Mr. Munhall, for later in his discourse he said that no day but the seventh day is the Sabbath. How then can he learn from Exodus 34:21; 35:2; Nehemiah 10:31, and 13:15 how Sunday should be kept? We agreed that the things of which he speaks ought not to be done on the *Sabbath*, because God has forbidden them. “Obey God,” says Mr. Munhall. So we say; and therefore we refrain from labor on the seventh day of the week, as God as commanded. But how can a man obey God by doing something, which God never commanded? Impossible. Mr. Munhall exhorts the people to obey God by refraining from labor on Sunday, and in the same discourse tells them that “there is no ‘Thus saith the Lord’ for the observe of Sunday,” and that “the Sabbath has never been transferred from the seventh to the first day.”

But a still more wonderful exposition followed. The Doctor said: “I may be called a Puritan, because of my rigid observance of Sunday. Very well, I am willing. There are specific reasons in God’s word why this day should be kept. Exodus 20: He says: ‘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.’ God has hallowed this day. Because he has hallowed it, we must keep it holy.”

God has hallowed the seventh day, and therefore we must keep the first day holy! If the Doctor had designed to give us an example of a *non sequitur*, he could not have done better. Yet he was in sober earnest. *God commands us to do a certain thing, and we obey him by doing something directly contrary!* People never reason that way in regard to the laws of men.

Ezekiel 20:12: “Moreover all so I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they may know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” On this text, the Doctor

made the following true statement: "Unless we observe the Sabbath as God has directed, we shall forget God. There was never a nation that ignored the Sabbath that did not forget God. France is an example, and the same thing is coming upon this country. [The speaker then quoted Exodus 31:15, 16; Nehemiah 13:18; and Ezekiel 20:20, 21.] These also have direct reference to God's ancient people, and to the troubles that came upon them because they violated the Sabbath. Their land was filled with mourning. The Sabbath was made for men (Mark 2:27), for the welfare of society. The violation of the Sabbath always brings trouble. Look at the riots in Chicago, St. Louis, and Cincinnati. In the cities the Sabbath is almost universally trampled under foot. There will also be riot and bloodshed in San Francisco if the Sabbath is not observed better. Show me a city where there is riot and bloodshed, and I will show you one where the Sabbath is disregarded."

It is true if that the violation of the Sabbath is always accompanied by forgetfulness of God. If all people kept the Sabbath, there would be no heathenism, and prosperity might be expected. Sabbath keeping is not a national, but an individual affair. That is, a nation, in its national capacity, cannot keep the Sabbath. A nation can be said to keep the Sabbath only when all the individuals composing a nation are Sabbath keepers. And when any considerable number of people in a nation does not observe the Sabbath, any number of legislative acts in favor of Sabbath-keeping will not make that nation a Sabbath-keeping nation. The same is true with regard to anything that God requires.

But it is the keeping of *the Sabbath* that makes people know the true God. Now Doctor Munhall himself declares that the seventh day, and that only, is the Sabbath. The seventh day alone was rested upon by the Creator; He blessed the seventh day and no other; and it is the seventh day only that the Creator appointed to be kept holy. No other day could be *kept* holy, because no other day was ever *made* holy. How then is it possible for Dr. Munhall, while acknowledging all these facts, to say that the disregard of Sunday is responsible for the prevailing godlessness? Further: Since the keeping of the Sabbath is the only evidence given to indicate that people know God, must we not conclude that the keeping of the day which is not the Sabbath, and the consequent profanation of the only day which God ever appointed as the Sabbath, is evidence that people have largely forgotten God? It cannot be otherwise. And when a nation goes so far as to enjoin the observance of Sunday, then we may know that God is practically ignored. And still further: When we find legislators and ministers of the gospel combining to enact laws devoting the Sabbath of God's appointment to pleasure, in order that men may rest on Sunday, concerning which God has said nothing except to command us to work upon it, we have overwhelming evidence that men are not only ignoring God, but that they have so forgotten him that they can heap insult upon him without the slightest fear of his power. "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." Most true it is that terrible judgments are coming upon this land because of the insults which the people have offered to the one great Lawgiver; and we cannot help trembling for the fate of men who use their influence as ministers of the gospel to induce people to disregard the true Sabbath of the Lord for a day which they acknowledge has no "Thus saith the Lord" in its behalf.

The Doctor seemed nettled because some reporters and doctors had poohed at a statement by him that man is built on a seventh-day plan, so that the Sabbath rest is a demand of his physical nature. We are willing to accept that statement. "The Sabbath was made for man," and we believe that the Lord made no mistake in the amount of time, which he allotted, to men for rest. But this is not given in the Bible as a reason for Sabbath observance. The Sabbath was given to man that he might remember God; and the fact that God commanded its observance is sufficient reason why we should keep it. Notice this fact: Nobody ever heard a Sabbath-keeper urge man's physical necessity as a reason for Sabbath observance; with a Sabbath-keeper, the commandment of God suffices. But the fact that man needs a rest one day in seven is the most prominent reason given for Sunday observance by the advocates of that day. It is the only thing they can urge; but as a Sunday argument it is useless from the fact that God has said nothing about it, and it is applicable to any other day of the week.

In behalf of Sunday as the Sabbath, the Doctor simply read Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; and Revelation 1:10, without comment. Since the last mentioned text makes no mention of the first day of the week, and since concerning the other two the Doctor said, "*The fact that the disciples met to break bread on the first day of the week is no authority for the sanctification of Sunday,*" we may safely say that he does not believe that the Bible anywhere authorizes Sunday observance. In fact, we know that he does not, for he said: "*The resurrection of Jesus Christ had no more to do with sanctification of Sunday than did his crucifixion on Friday.* Some people think that it did, but there is no 'Thus saith the Lord for' it." Again he said: "There is no 'Thus saith the Lord' for keeping the first day of the week, and there is no use in saying there is when there isn't. The seventh day was hallowed by the Lord, and there has been no transfer."

We would that Dr. Munhall's hearers remember these words, and then follow his exhortation to "obey God." But someone may be anxious to know why he keeps Sunday, holding the views that he does. Well, here is his "reason:"—

"We find evidence that the disciples did keep the first day, and therefore we keep it; though why they kept it I do not know, for they gave no reason, and there is no 'Thus saith the Lord' for it."

The "evidence" that the disciples kept the first day is all found in Acts 20:7, and 1 Corinthians 16:2, which is just no evidence at all. But allowing the Doctor's claim, that the disciples did keep Sunday, what then? Why, we have been doing something for which they have given no reason, and for which no reason could be given. One of the same disciples charges us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is in you." How can we do this if we keep Sunday, since the apostles themselves gave no reason for it, and the Lord never commanded it? The fact that the Lord never commanded Sunday observance, and that the apostles, while exhorting Christians to be able to give a reason for their faith and practice, gave no reason for Sunday observance, should convince anybody that the apostles never kept Sunday.

In closing, the Doctor said: "I know that I can't observe the law of the Sabbath on the seventh day." Well, then, in the name of common sense, how can the law of the Sabbath be observed? That law enjoins the observance of the seventh day of the week, and no other. This law Dr. Munhall proposes to observe by keeping Sunday! And by the same token we propose to celebrate next Fourth of July the first of August. It will be just as easy for us to rest on the Fourth of July on the first of August, as it is for Dr. Munhall to observe the law of the Sabbath on the first day of the week.

But why cannot the Doctor "observe the law of the Sabbath" on the seventh day, the day which the law of the Sabbath designates? Because "as things are in the world," it is *inconvenient!* Is this the same man who half an hour before said: "You have no business to forget; you must not think that every desire is to be gratified at the expense of God's commandment. If your business will suffer if you keep the Sabbath, let it suffer. Obey God. That is all you have to do. The man who lives up to an honest conviction and does right, must expect to suffer inconvenience"? Yes, it is a very same man who now says that "as things are in this world" he cannot keep the Sabbath. And then in the next breath he urges his hearers "to have a conscience in this matter"!

In Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," we read of one 'Mr. By-ends', one of whose kinsmen was 'Mr. Facing-both-ways', who earned his money as a waterman, "looking one way and rowing another." The Saviour described the same class of men when he said: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not seek after their works; for they say, and do not." It was not by accident that Bunyan made 'Mr. By-ends' a relative of 'Mr. Facing-both-ways'; *for when a man acknowledges a certain obligation, and then says that circumstances will not allow him to regard it, he faces both ways, and advertises himself as a man who has ends of his own to serve.*

We might sum up Dr. Munhall's discourse as follows: —

1. The law of the Sabbath was given at creation, and simply reaffirmed at Sinai.
2. The seventh day of the week, and no other, is the Sabbath.
3. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation, and was given that men might remember God.
4. Those people and nations that disregard the Sabbath will have to suffer disastrous consequences.
5. No man has any business to forget the Sabbath, or to allow business or pleasure to interfere with his observance of it. God requires us to obey him whether it is convenient or not.
6. The first day of the week is not the Sabbath, and there is no use in saying that it is. God rested upon and sanctified only the seventh day, and no transfer has ever been

made. There is no “Thus saith the Lord” for the observance of Sunday. God never required it.

This is good Bible doctrine: whenever the Doctor preaches such doctrine, we shall be glad to assist him in his work by giving it wide circulation. And in connection with the above, we hope no one will fail to remember Dr. Munhall’s only “reason” for keeping Sunday. It is this: —

“I believe that the apostles kept Sunday, though I don’t know of any reason why they did so. The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath, but it isn’t convenient to keep it.”

In conclusion, we would urge our readers to heed the Doctor’s exhortation to “have a conscience in this matter.”