

“The Sabbath and the Apostasy”

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FOR the benefit of a Wimbledon correspondent we will reply to a few points suggested regarding the Sabbath question, although the same have been frequently covered in our columns.

GOD MADE IT

1. He refers to Christ's words, “The Sabbath was made for the man, and not man for the Sabbath,” and says, “If my hat is made for my head and the hat does not fit, I would not go to work to make my head fit the hat, but the hat must be adapted to fit the head.”

But this would be a charge against the Lord, which could not be discussed. The Lord makes no mistakes or misfits. The Sabbath was made for man. Our correspondent is a man. Therefore it was made for him. It is the person who has never tried it on who is sure it will not fit. No one has ever yet truly yielded to the command, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” who has not found the blessing which the Lord placed upon the day when He made it. “O taste and see that the Lord is good.”

ONE FIRST-DAY MEETING

2. From the twentieth of Acts our correspondent infers that the disciples, stopping at Troas seven days, held no meetings until “the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.”

This is an assumption wholly groundless. Paul was pushing on toward Jerusalem in such haste that, as recorded in the same chapter, he had not time to go to Ephesus, and sent for the elders of that church to meet him at Miletus, and yet our correspondent would have him waiting in Troas seven days without meetings, in order to give us an example of Sunday observance. The record wholly refutes this supposition. The meeting in verse 7 was an evening meeting on the “first day,” and as such, according to the scriptural reckoning of days, must have been at the close of the Sabbath, on what we should call Saturday night; for a Sunday night meeting would be on the second day of the week. As Coneybeare and Howson say in their “Life and Epistles of Paul,”

It was the evening, which succeeded the Jewish Sabbath. On the Sunday morning the vessel was about to sail.

Having remained with the church over Sabbath, an evening meeting was held, as it was the apostle's last visit, and on Sunday, as the boat containing his companions was navigated to Assos, the Apostle Paul, to quote Coneybeare and Howson again, "pursued his lonely road that Sunday afternoon in spring among the oak woods and the streams of Ida," having spent the Sunday in a journey on foot of about twenty miles. But wholly aside from this, cannot every one see that a meeting on a day cannot make a Sabbath or a sacred day of it, nor make void the commandments of God? Divine institutions are not so loosely established.

THE WORDS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

3. Referring to Paul's references in his Epistles to festivals and holy days, our correspondent says if these refer to the ceremonial festivals and the various annual sabbaths "then it must be admitted that Paul wrote fourteen Epistles, and never mentioned the Sabbath at all, except when referring to the future he said, There remains therefore a rest, or keeping of a Sabbath, to the people of God."

The Study in Romans last week dealt with some of the references to festivals and annual ceremonial sabbaths which the Jews were to keep "besides the Sabbaths of the Lord" (Lev. 23:38), and dealt with the principle involved in all, and the same study in this number touches upon it. As to the rest that remains, by a mere coincidence the notes on our first page echo the Gospel invitation to all to enjoy the rest that remains.

A word, then, about the Epistles which do not specifically mention the Sabbath. They are not merely the language of Paul, but the language of the Holy Spirit, and that Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts and throughout the Gospels speaks as plainly of the Sabbath as God's voice spoke of it from Sinai. Moreover, in all of Paul's Epistles he preaches the Gospel of Christ, and of necessity shows that sin is the transgression of the law of God, and that the only salvation for the sinner is that provided in order that "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." He shows that it is only the carnal mind that "is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Not the Gentile mind (nationally speaking), but the carnal mind.

What has this to do with the Sabbath? The same Holy Spirit, which in all of Paul's Epistles holds up the law of God as the eternal standard of righteousness, in the Epistle of James says that he that offends in one point "is guilty of all. For He that said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." And He who said, "Do not kill," said also, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." It all stands together, and, therefore, wherever the Holy Spirit, by Paul or any other servant, proclaims the law of God by which we shall be judged, the Sabbath is also proclaimed.

BUT ONE GOSPEL

THE Apostle Paul did not preach a Gospel of his own. As a servant of the Lord he believed Christ's words: —

“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:18, 19).

Therefore wherever the apostle went he left Sabbath-keeping churches. Our correspondent says that the churches of Judea kept the Sabbath, but not the Gentile churches. But the Holy Spirit says that the church of Thessalonica, composed mainly of Greeks, “became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess. 2:14).

The Lord has not two Gospels. Every sinner who is saved, Jew or Gentile after the flesh, will have been justified by faith, and to be justified by faith is to have the carnal mind taken away and be made a doer of the law, for that is the Divine definition of justification. (Rom. 2:13).

THE APOSTASY

IT was not until long after apostolic days that there was any occasion for controversy regarding seventh or first-day observance. The apostasy had not developed, and the whole world knew nothing of any weekly rest day other than the Sabbath. The heathen world had “times” and festivals, but no rest day. History shows that when the “falling away” came, and the festival day of the sun was adopted and christened, the Sabbath was still formally retained as a rest day, and Sunday was observed by professed believers after the manner of the heathen, not as a day of rest, but as Tertullian says, writing about A. D. 200, as a day of special mirth and license. What that means, anyone who has read of the practices attending sun worship knows.

With the growth of apostasy even a formal recognition of the Sabbath ceased in the great body of the worldly church, and by the Council of Laodicea (about A.D. 361) the body of believers who kept the Sabbath of the Lord and refused to follow the lead of apostasy were anathematized.

THE CALL TO REFORMATION

NOW that the falling away has come, and the power that was to “think to change” the law of God (Dan. 7:25) has arisen and done its work, it is for Christians to recognize the fact that no power on earth can change the law of God. It is more than a mere question of a day. It is a question of the ‘one-day’ that God has

blessed, and a question of loyalty to God's law and Government. Now, when the coming of the Lord is drawing near, and the day when every man will give an account of himself before the Judgment Court of God, the Lord by His Word is calling men from tradition back to the Gospel of Christ, as Jesus Himself preached it and lived it. And just as surely as Jesus lived a life of obedience and Sabbath-keeping then, just as surely will He do the same now in every soul that yields itself to Him. This is living by the faith of Jesus.

The fact that Christ is soon to return gives force and urgency to the call to reformation. "We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin" (1 John 3:2-5). And only as we abide in Him, and He in us, can we be kept from sin and transgression. That is the reason why the law of God is a law of liberty to the believer, and not a yoke of bondage. Christ's call, then, to Sabbath-keeping, is but the invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).