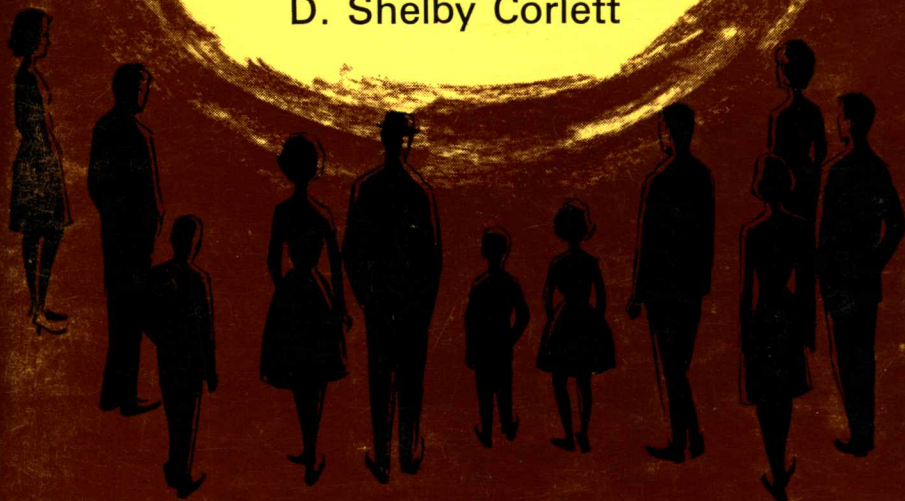


# The Christian Sabbath

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*by*

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## CHAPTER ONE

# The Meaning of Sabbath

What is the true Sabbath? Due to the agitation of Sabbatarians and the confusion among Christians resulting from their teachings, more inquiries are made concerning the Sabbath question than perhaps any other modern fallacy. Conscientious Christians desire to obey God and keep His commandments regardless of the personal cost to them. Since Sabbatarians make the observing of Sunday as a day of worship a sign of apostasy and the mark of the beast, confusion prevails among those who have been touched by these teachings. The questions summarized are: Is the seventh day of the fourth commandment the same as the seventh day of the week of our Gregorian calendar? Are Christians bound to keep the seventh day of the week, our present Saturday, as the Sabbath? In this booklet we will present as clearly as possible answers to these questions; also we will give reasons for Christians observing what is commonly called the first day of the week, or Sunday, as a day of worship.

Different meanings are given to the word *sabbath* in Scripture. Its primary meaning everywhere is "cessation," "to cease to do," or "rest"; also it may mean a division of days. In Scripture the Sabbath is closely connected with the word *seven* or *seventh*: the seventh day (Exod. 20:10), or weekly Sabbath, a day of rest; the sabbatical year, "the seventh year shall be a sabbath" (Lev. 25:4); also "the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year" (Lev. 25:8, 10). Special

feast days not occurring on or near the weekly Sabbath were called sabbath days, such as the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27-32). Primarily the word *sabbath* stresses what the day, year, or period was meant to be, namely, a day or period of rest, a sacred time, and not necessarily the particular number of a day in the week.

Early in the history of the world the seventh day (it is noteworthy that the word Sabbath does not appear in this connection) is sanctified by God and called a holy or sacred day: "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. 2:3). In this statement a universal principle is stated, namely, the necessity of a seventh day of rest after a period of six days of labor, and the day is made sacred by God's blessing upon it. This principle is inherent in the nature of man and the universe; hence we have emphasized in Scripture the day of rest for man and beast each seventh day after six days of labor, a year of rest for the land after six years of productivity, and the suggestion of a final millennium of sabbath rest for the whole universe, when everything within the universe is brought into harmony with God and His will.

The Decalogue reiterates this fundamental principle by the statement of the fourth commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20:8-10). The principle of the commandment is based upon the Sabbath of creation, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, . . . and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it" (Exod. 20:11). Note particularly in this connection that the Sabbath is not stated as being a memorial of a finished creation; it is the reiteration of a fundamental principle revealed at creation: a sacred day of rest following six days of labor.

The Ten Commandments are ten moral principles. They reveal the true fundamentals of social or human life, stressing man's obligation to God and to his fellow beings. These commandments are true, fundamentally so, and would be true were they not revealed; but being true, God in His infinite goodness has revealed them to us. These moral principles necessarily are binding upon all men without regard to their moral or spiritual state. The Sabbath, a sacred day of rest after six days of labor, is as much a moral principle as any of the other commandments. "The sabbath was made for man," said Jesus. Its requirement is based upon a distinct human need. The rest of the seventh day restores the depleted supply of physical energy consumed during the six working days; the worship on this sacred day gives mental stimulation and spiritual blessing; and man is further rewarded through his recognition of God as a Divine Ruler and by obedience to God's law.

Does this Sabbath principle, the seventh day, mean a specific day in the week of seven days, or does it mean the seventh day after six days of labor? In other words, did God bless a specific day of the week, for example a seventh day, called Saturday, and make it a holy day; or did He bless the seventh day, any day of the week, after six days of labor? "The essence of Sabbath law," says Benjamin Field, in his *Handbook of Christian Theology*, "is that one day in seven, the seventh day after six days of labor should be appropriated to sacred uses. Accordingly we find that, in the original institution (Gen. 2:3) it is stated in general terms that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, which must, undoubtedly, imply the sanctity of every seventh day, at whatever given time the cycle may commence. In the Decalogue it is also mentioned in the same indefinite manner with respect to time. Nothing more being expressly required than to observe a day of sacred rest after six days of toil. The seventh day is to be kept holy, but not

a word is said as to what epoch the commencement of the series is to be referred. It is the seventh day in reference to the six before mentioned."

The earliest references to the Sabbath in Scripture establish it as a fundamental principle, an inherent part of the moral law. For man's benefit and to honor God the principle of a sacred day of rest following six days of labor is given. Nothing more than this is stated or implied and no one has a right to go beyond that which is written.



## CHAPTER TWO

# The Jewish Sabbath, a Memorial

The Sabbath principle, namely, a sacred day of rest following six days of toil, is revealed by God through scriptural statements made early in human history (Gen. 2:3), and confirmed in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. This principle was emphasized in the previous chapter. In this chapter we shall note how this Sabbath principle was adapted to Israel in the nature of a memorial. The Sabbath principle is fundamental and universal, but the adaptation of this principle to Israel as a memorial in the Jewish Sabbath is not possible of universal application. For example, on this Jewish memorial Sabbath they could not kindle a fire (Exod. 35:3), so this Sabbath could not be kept strictly in a cold climate.

The Sabbath principle as emphasized in God's statements following creation and in the fourth commandment is, a sacred day of rest following six days of toil. Man is as much obligated to engage in the days of toil as he is to observe the day of rest. "They are told," says Matthew Henry, "what is the day they must observe—a seventh, after six days of labor; whether this was the seventh by computation from the first seventh, or from the day of their coming out of Egypt, or both, is not certain" in the statement of this commandment.

However the given time in which Israel's Sabbath commenced and its related purpose to Israel is suggested in God's Word. The beginning of Israel's year is stated (Exod. 12:1-2); the institution of the Passover feast as a perpetual memorial feast is given in detail; it began

on the night of the fourteenth day of their first month, Abib (Exod. 13:3-4), making the fifteenth day the first full day of the feast, and the feast continued for seven days (12:14-28). It is of interest to note that although there was to be a period of seven days of feast there is no mention made here of the Sabbath, nor is there instruction given to observe another seventh day in that month following the Passover. The institution of the Sabbath in Israel was to come later.

The Sabbath observance of the seventh day came to Israel in connection with God's act of giving the manna in the wilderness (Exod. 16:1-31). Note carefully how and when this Sabbath was brought into the religious practices of Israel. The record states that Israel "took their journey from Elim, . . . on the fifteenth day of the second month" (v. 1); this indicates definitely that the fifteenth day was not observed as a Sabbath. The instruction Moses gave concerning the manna was, "in the morning," or the sixteenth day of the month, that God would send the manna to the encamped nation (vv. 4-7). They were to gather the manna for six days, but on the sixth day they were to gather twice the usual daily amount so they would not need to gather it on the seventh day, for "to morrow [the seventh day] is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord" (v. 23). What date was this tomorrow? It was seven days after the fifteenth—which was not observed as a Sabbath—or the twenty-second day of the month. If the twenty-second day was a sabbath and the fifteenth day was not, each of them being a seventh day, something occurred between the fifteenth and the twenty-second days which made the twenty-second "the holy sabbath unto the Lord." The incident which occurred was the giving of the manna, and beyond question it marks the beginning of the seventh-day cycle of Sabbath keeping with Israel. A further evidence that the Sabbath was something new in Israel is the detailed instruction Moses gave in con-

nection with the gathering of the manna and the apparent ignorance of the people and the confusion among them which is indicated by the large number of Israelites who went out to gather manna on the Sabbath day. This is an indication that these Hebrew slaves had not known or kept the Sabbath during their days in Egypt nor on their journeyings prior to this date. So it was here, at the time when God gave Israel the manna, that the Sabbath principle of a sacred day of rest after six days of labor became definitely established as a part of Israel's life. It is the given time in which the seventh-day cycle of the Sabbath commenced in Israel's history.

But the Sabbath was to Israel more than a day of rest following six days of labor; it was a memorial day. It is not primarily a memorial of the finished work of creation, as it is generally supposed, for in no place is the Sabbath mentioned as a memorial of that creation day rest, although the principle of the Sabbath as revealed by that creation rest day is mentioned in connection with the Sabbath commandment.

What, then, is the significance of the Jewish Sabbath as a memorial? It is threefold. First, it was a memorial of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt; "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out . . . therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15). Second, it signified Israel's sacred relation to God and His rulership over them: "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you . . . whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death" (Exod. 31:13-15). Third, it was a sign of a perpetual covenant with Israel: "Israel shall keep the sabbath, . . . throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Exod. 31:16-17).



All of the detailed and ceremonial laws given to Israel, such as the requirement to make no fire on the Sabbath, and the feasts connected with certain Sabbaths, were related definitely to Israel's seventh-day memorial Sabbath. These laws were not in any way related to the Sabbath principle, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, although the principle of the day of rest—a day in which no servile work was to be done—ran through the entire requirement of Israel's Sabbath observation. The principle of the Sabbath, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, is universal; but the Sabbath as a memorial to Israel, the seventh day of Israel's week, the cycle which began with the giving of the manna, was not universal. It was specifically related to Israel alone and not to other peoples or nations, for God positively stated that the Israel memorial Sabbath "is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever." In fact it is impossible to keep the detailed laws of Israel's memorial Sabbath except in restricted areas of the earth. As we have noted, people in the colder climates must make fires on the Sabbath and the making of a fire is strictly forbidden on Israel's memorial Sabbath.

A new cycle for reckoning the seventh-day time may be instituted with an altogether different memorial without violating the Sabbath principle stated at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, which was a sacred day of rest following six days of labor. The institution of this new cycle with a different memorial does no more violence to the Sabbath principle than did the institution of Israel's cycle of time reckoned upon their deliverance from Egypt.

The Bible teaching on the Sabbath is twofold. First, there is the Sabbath principle stated by God at the close of creation, when He rested and blessed the seventh day; and this principle is reiterated and confirmed by God in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. This principle is a sacred day of rest following six days of toil. The

second teaching is Israel's memorial Sabbath, which is definitely related to the nation of Israel alone. It fell on the seventh day of Israel's week and had specific laws and ceremonies connected with it which could not fit into any universal observation of that special memorial Sabbath day. The principle of the Sabbath is universal and it is the moral obligation of all men, but Israel's memorial Sabbath was binding upon only that nation.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Jewish Year Changed Annually

Previously we have noted the twofold teaching of the Bible relative to the Sabbath: first as a universal principle stated by God at creation and confirmed in the fourth commandment, and second as a specific memorial day to the nation of Israel. The question under consideration in this chapter is the Jewish memorial Sabbath. Was it on a fixed day of the week, or was it observed on a fixed date in the year, necessitating a change in the memorial day each year?

From the Scripture we gather that the Israelites had two years; a civil year which began about the time of our month of September, and a religious year beginning about the time of the latter part of our month of March. Their Sabbath, the weekly memorial day, was dated from the first of the religious year (Lev. 23:4-6).

The first Sabbath mentioned in connection with Israel's second year began on the evening of the fourteenth of the month of Abib and concluded on the fifteenth (Lev. 23:6); and this Feast of Passover, or of unleavened bread, continued seven full days, until the evening of the twenty-first (Exod. 12:18), concluding on the twenty-second; for "From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath," (Lev. 23:32) said God to Israel. Thus two Sabbath dates—the fifteenth and the twenty-second—are established in the month of Abib, the first month of their religious year. Since the Sabbath principle was six days of labor before a seventh day of rest or Sabbath, it follows necessarily that Sabbath also fell on the first and eighth days of the month. This

month Abib was the beginning of months (Exod. 13:3-4); therefore the first week of Israel's first month began on a Sabbath. Also in each year, without exception, the first day of the month Abib must be a Sabbath. Thus by Scripture we have located the Sabbaths in the first month of Israel's religious year as being fixed dates in the month rather than being on a fixed day of the week.

In the light of that fact we ask, Was this first Sabbath the seventh day of the last week of the old year, or was it the first day of the first week of the new year? By this Jewish Sabbath the Sabbath principle given at creation and confirmed in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue is followed distinctly, for it is the Sabbath following six days of labor; but also it is the first day of the first week of the new Jewish religious year.

The Jewish memorial Sabbath always began on a fixed date in the year, just like our New Year's and Christmas days, and not on a given day of the week (Exod. 12:1-2; 13:3-4). No method is known for computing the calendar by which a full year may be divided into an equal number of weeks of seven days each. Bible scholars are agreed that it is not possible to know accurately what calendar Israel followed before their captivity. If, as some think, it was a thirteen-month year with twenty-eight days each, this accounts only for 364 days; another day must be added somewhere to fill out the required 365 days. If, as some other scholars think, it was a twelve-month year of thirty days each, five intercalary days must be added to fill out the year. But in either case it is not possible for a regular week of seven days to be observed throughout the year and have the new year begin with a Sabbath; one extra day must be accounted for in order to bring this about. It is also important to note that there was in the first month a fixed workday, the tenth day of the month, when they were to gather the lambs to sacrifice (Exod. 12:3). This could not be a Sabbath, for no such work could be



performed on a Sabbath; hence a weekly-cycle Sabbath is impossible.

An example of this is our present New Year's Day. New Year's Day of 1961 fell on Sunday. It was the first day of the year and the first Sunday of the year; but it will be 1967 before New Year's Day occurs on Sunday, again and between these dates of 1961 and 1967 it will fall on other days of the week. Since the law required that the Jewish memorial Sabbath must be observed on the first day of each year, and since the only means we know of computing the calendar would require that at least one extra day be inserted to permit this memorial Sabbath to fall on this first day of the month, there must have been an extra Sabbath inserted at some time in the year.

Was this day inserted? Did God plan for its insertion, or was it man-made? There are scriptural suggestions that it was inserted and done according to the plan of God, and that this change came at the time of the Feast of Pentecost. The date of the Feast of Pentecost was established by counting "from the morrow after the sabbath" (Lev. 23:15-21), at Passover time when the grain harvest began and a wave sheaf was presented to God. "Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days." And this "morrow after the seventh sabbath" was Pentecost, a Sabbath celebrating the giving of the law at Sinai, and the rest after the labors of grain harvest; for this feast marked the close of the grain harvest, when bread made from the freshly harvested grain was presented to God. This Pentecost was a holy convocation or Sabbath in which no servile work was to be done. Thus two Sabbaths, or memorial days, came in consecutive order, making a forty-eight-hour Sabbath, which they observed. From instructions given concerning another feast we may understand the procedure Israel followed after observing a Sabbath feast. Note that God commanded Israel to

keep the feast of unleavened bread, or Passover, for a full week and the feast concluded with a Sabbath; and that His command relative to the next Sabbath was, "Six days thou shalt work [after the feast], but on the seventh day thou shalt rest" (Exod. 34:18-21). It seems that the "six days thou shalt work" following the observance of the feast was as much a command as "on the seventh day thou shalt rest." Applying this instruction to the Pentecost Feast, it would mean that here also it would be required of Israel to work six days after this forty-eight-hour Sabbath feast before they observed the next seventh day when they should rest. Since the Sabbath principle demanded six days of labor between Sabbaths, the seventh day or weekly memorial Sabbath of Israel would be numbered from Pentecost, and thus it would continue throughout the year. With this forty-eight-hour Sabbath the religious year was adjusted to the calendar year and the first of the month of Abib would fall on the Sabbath. Thus it is apparent from the Scriptures that the Jewish memorial weekly Sabbath changed each year at the Feast of Pentecost.

But do not the Jews observe the seventh day of our week, Saturday, as their Sabbath today? They do. How do they reckon this seventh day as the Sabbath? They have adjusted their religious year to the present calendar year. The mode of reckoning time now used by the Jews, we are told, was perhaps perfected by Rabbi Hillel in the year A.D. 359 or 360. Some students place the date of this change as late as A.D. 500. Jewish authorities themselves recognize that there is no direct connection between their present calendar and that used by the original Israelites. In the *Jewish Encyclopedia* these statements are found: "The modern Jewish calendar is adapted to the Greek computation exclusively. . . . The modern Jewish calendar seems to have been inaugurated in 363 A.D., and Rabbi Hillel appears to have modified it by introducing some innovations."

The present Jewish calendar differs from the original calendar at least in this fact that the Sabbath now has a fixed day in the week (Saturday) and needs not to be adjusted to a fixed date in the year. It is worthy to note that this observance of Saturday as Sabbath by the Jews dates no further back than the fourth century after Christ. So Saturday is no nearer the original Jewish memorial weekly Sabbath date than Sunday or any other day of the week would be.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# Jesus and the Sabbath

Two facts have been considered in our study regarding the Sabbath: first, that the Sabbath principle was stated at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, a sacred day of rest after six days of toil; and second, that the Jewish Sabbath was a memorial day, a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, a day signifying their sacred relation to God, and a sign of a perpetual covenant between God and Israel. Also we noted that it is apparent that the Jewish memorial Sabbath changed annually. Now we will consider Jesus and His relation to the Jewish Sabbath.

Jesus was a Jew and He strictly observed all of the requirements made upon Him by the Jewish religion. Certain Jewish religious ceremonies were observed in His childhood. It was His regular custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day (Luke 4:16). All of Jesus' life was lived under the strict requirements of the Jewish religion. Even a few hours before His death He observed the Passover with His disciples. He lived as a Jew and not in the Christian dispensation. The Sabbath kept by Jesus was the regular Jewish memorial Sabbath, just as was the Passover.

Jesus differed from the religious leaders of His day in His thoughts concerning the Sabbath. This was the point which created much controversy between Him and the religious leaders of the Jews. They condemned Him for healing the lame on the Sabbath, but He assured them that it was proper to do good on the Sabbath day (Luke 6:6-11). He put new content into the meaning

of the Sabbath. He proclaimed that He was Lord of the Sabbath and declared that "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The purpose of the Sabbath was to bring benefit to man, not to enslave him by hidebound traditions. His disciples while passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath plucked some grain to satisfy their hunger, a legitimate act on any other day, and for this they were condemned as Sabbathbreakers by the Pharisees. Jesus said that they were not to be judged as breakers of the law for this act, any more than was David, who with his men in order to maintain their lives went into the house of God, against the sacred law, and ate the holy shewbread; or than were the priests who in their functioning in worship in the Temple broke the law of the Sabbath. He proclaimed His authority over these practices by saying, "In this place is one greater than the temple"; and that "the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matt. 12:6, 8). John Wesley says of this statement, "This certainly implies that the Sabbath was an institution of great and distinguished importance. It may perhaps also refer to that signal act of authority which Christ afterwards exerted over it in changing it from the seventh to the first day of the week." So Jesus maintained the Sabbath principle by emphasizing that the Sabbath was made for man, for his benefit physically, mentally, and spiritually, and that the Sabbath was not to be a bondage placed upon man but it was to be a distinct blessing to him.

Another fact is apparent throughout the entire life of Jesus; that is, His consciousness that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He stated that not one jot or one tittle should "pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). He also warned against the breaking even the least of the commandments and the teaching of men to do likewise (Matt. 5:19). So the whole purpose of His life was to fulfill the law.

The law as revealed by God to Israel was threefold: the Ten Commandments or the moral law, which form the foundation for all stable society (Exod. 20:1-26); the judgments, which related to the civil life of Israel, which generally are stated in Exodus 21 through 24; and the ceremonial laws, or "ordinances" which governed Israel's worship (Exod. 31:18).

Jesus came to fulfill the whole law. He kept the Ten Commandments and gave to them a new depth of meaning. These moral laws with the deeper meaning given them by Jesus remain always as the law for all men, and they are the basis for stability in society. He fulfilled the civil laws and the ceremonial laws, although He often clashed with the religious leaders of His day on their interpretation of these laws; and He fulfilled their ceremonial laws by bringing into being something new to replace them. The supreme moment of fulfillment of much of the law, the time when numerous jots and tittles passed away through fulfillment, was in the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. The Passover, commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt, was fulfilled and it passed away when "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7). A new type of circumcision was instituted by Jesus; "In whom [Christ] also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11). In fact, all of the ceremonial practices connected with Israel's religious observances pointed toward a time of future fulfillment; these all were fulfilled by Jesus and hence they passed away.

Did the crucifixion of Jesus have any particular and definite relation to Israel's memorial Sabbath? It did. Paul gives a striking and illuminating statement concerning this, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; . . . Let no man



therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:14-17).

Jesus after His resurrection met with His disciples on the first day of the week, on the evening of His resurrection and on the evening of the first day of the next week (John 20:19-23, 26). During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension He was seen by different persons and groups (I Cor. 15:5-7); "also he shewed himself alive after his passion" to His disciples "by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

What were "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" of which He spoke? We do not know specifically. But it is not improbable that among these He spoke to them concerning the change of the day of worship from the Jewish memorial Sabbath to the first day of the week. The very fact that these early Christians called the first-day Sabbath "the Lord's day" strongly implies that it was inaugurated and observed upon His authority. Compare these two terms: the Lord's Supper and the Lord's day. Do they not imply that there is the same authority back of one as the other and that the Lord's day was instituted by our Lord as well as was the Lord's Supper? To say the least, Christ's whole attitude toward the Jewish memorial Sabbath as He found it being observed by the Jewish people of His day was such as would make a change of some kind necessary.

The change of the Sabbath from the Jewish memorial of their deliverance from Egypt and their covenant with God as a nation came as a result of what Jesus said and did while He was here on earth. After His crucifixion He sanctified the first day of the week by His resurrection on that day, by His appearances to His disciples on that day, and by His pouring out of the

Holy Spirit upon His Church on the Day of Pentecost, which was also the first day of the week. Jesus knew that the new wine of the Kingdom, the power of the Holy Spirit, could not be contained in the old wineskins of Judaism, and this included their memorial Sabbath. A new Sabbath was necessary, one which was expressive of and a memorial to the resurrection of Jesus and of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in His Church; hence we have the Lord's day, the first-day-of-the-week Sabbath.

But let us note carefully that the Sabbath principle—that of a sacred day of rest after six days of toil—given at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, was not done away by Jesus. That principle is fixed in the very nature of the universe; it will never be done away. But the Jewish memorial Sabbath, based upon this Sabbath principle and counted from the time cycle established after their deliverance from Egypt, was fulfilled and done away by Jesus. That memorial Sabbath was a shadow. Christ has fulfilled that, and the shadow is no longer apparent or needed; the new memorial has been brought into existence by Jesus, a memorial of His resurrection on the first day of the week.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Early Church and the Sabbath

Thus far we have emphasized that the Jewish memorial Sabbath was to that nation the application of the Sabbath principle given in creation and confirmed in the Decalogue, namely, a sacred day of rest after six days of labor. In the last chapter we noted that this Jewish memorial Sabbath, along with ceremonial practices, which were a shadow of things to come, were fulfilled and done away by Jesus in the Cross, but the Sabbath principle remained and a new memorial was suggested. Now we will consider the Early Church and the Sabbath.

It must be kept in mind that the leaders and most of the members of the early Christian Church were Jews. The full recognition of the Christian light did not dawn upon them instantly; it came gradually. True, they received much light with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, but they had much to learn down through the coming years, and Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would teach and guide them into all truth. An example of this is their slowness to comprehend that the scope of the Christian Church and gospel was universal; it was not to be confined to the Jew. Even their leader, Peter, had to experience divine instruction in a vision on the housetop in Joppa before he would cross over racial and religious barriers to preach the gospel to the devout gentile, Cornelius, and his house (Acts 10:1-48). It is very evident that, although the fulfillment of the "shadow of things to come"



—those ceremonies and memorials of the Jewish religion—was accomplished by Jesus in a very brief time, the recognition of this fulfillment by the Church and the transition from the old “shadow” to the true substance came gradually.

It is not strange that we find the Early Church leaders attending Sabbath services in the synagogue and they continued “daily with one accord in the temple” (Acts 2:46). They were still Jews and the full significance of the new light brought by Jesus had not yet dawned upon them; and further, their vision of their commission to spread the gospel was “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Hence they would take the gospel to the place where worshiping Jews were found, and in the Acts of the Apostles occasional reference is made to the fact that the apostles and others preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. No more significance can be placed upon their attendance at the preaching in the synagogue than their evangelistic passion to reach the people with the gospel, and the fact that they were Jews as well as Christians.

It is evident that their worship as Jews on the Jewish Sabbath was not entirely satisfying to these Christians, for there are indications that they observed another stated time of worship, namely, the first day of the week. Several scriptures mention the first day of the week and imply that worship meetings were held on this day. Paul met with the brethren at Troas on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The manner in which this meeting is stated indicates that this first-day-of-the-week meeting was an established custom. That it was the custom of the early Christians to break bread—in love feast—is stated (Acts 2:42), and it is here apparent that this breaking of bread was done on the first day of the week. Paul exhorted the Corinthian Christians to make their contributions on the first day of the week, and this implies a service on that day.



Where did this first-day-of-the-week custom originate? It is apparent that it was closely connected with the memorial of the resurrection of Jesus. The risen Lord met with the assembled disciples on the evening of His resurrection, the first day of the week (John 20: 19-23); also He met with them eight days later, which would be the first day of the next week (John 20:26-29). By such meetings Jesus had approved the first day of the week as a time for giving worship to Him, the risen Lord.

Jesus nowhere stated that there would be a new memorial Sabbath, although He did emphasize that the old shadow would be fulfilled. He did tell His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: . . . and he will shew you things to come. . . . he shall . . . bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 16:12-13; 14:26). To the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit were committed the formulation of doctrine, the settlement of problems relative to the observation of the law of Moses, the compilation of the New Testament canon, and the establishment of a Christian Sabbath, the first day of the week.

Early in the history of the Christian Church, after a large number of gentiles had become believers, there arose a controversy concerning the requirements upon these gentile Christians to observe the law of Moses, particularly that they should accept the rite of circumcision. The contention was so sharp and the situation became so serious that a council of leaders of the Church met at Jerusalem to consider this problem. The record of this council meeting and its action is given in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, to verse thirty-five. The problem was considered from all angles and the decision under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

is stated, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well" (vv. 28-29). The significant fact in relation to our study is that in this statement no mention is made of the Sabbath, although it must have been involved as a part of the demands made by the Judaizers who were disturbing the gentile Christians over matters related to the law.

The question often is asked, Where in the Bible is authority given for Christians to worship on the first-day Sabbath, or Sunday? The outright answer must be, There is no definite statement or authority given in the Bible for the observance of the first-day Christian Sabbath. But that is not the final answer, for the Bible implies such authority under the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the Church; and as we have seen, the Scriptures state that during the time it was being written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit the New Testament Church was meeting for worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1; Rev. 1:10).

Let us ask another question, Where in the Bible do we have authority to accept any book of the Old or New Testament as worthy of having a place in the sacred Scriptures? The outright answer is, There is not one book whose writer says, "This book belongs in the sacred scriptures." But again, this is not the final answer. We know that the prophecy of old came not by the will of man, but that holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21); and that "God . . . at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers" (Heb. 1:1). But nowhere in these writings did God have these holy men say, "This is Scripture."

Upon what authority do we claim the sixty-six books of the Bible to be the sacred Scriptures, the Word of God? Upon the authority of the Spirit of God working with and in the religious leaders of the Hebrews for the Old Testament, and with the leaders of the Christian Church for the New Testament. Down through the centuries spiritually minded leaders among the Jews, guided by the Holy Spirit, the One who had inspired men to write God's message, were enabled to recognize within certain writings the quality of divine inspiration, and within time these writings or books were included in the sacred Scriptures. This decision was not an impulsive or quick act; for while many books were recognized to be divinely inspired and were accepted as scripture rather early, other books were considered for centuries before they were included among the sacred books. In fact it was not until the meeting of the Jewish Council of Jamnia, ninety years after the birth of Jesus, that the Old Testament canon as we have it now was finally formed.

The same is true of the New Testament. Some of the writings were recognized early as being scriptures. Peter in his Second Epistle says the writings of "our beloved Paul" belong among "the other scriptures" (3:16). But some of the books of our present New Testament were not finally accepted by the Christian Church leaders, guided by the Holy Spirit, until centuries after they were written under the inspiration of God. Indeed the New Testament canon as we have it today was not finally accepted by the Church until the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397.

Let us ask again, Upon what authority do we have the sixty-six books of our Bible as scriptures? The answer is, Upon the authority of the Christian Church guided by the Holy Spirit to recognize the writings which holy men of old wrote as they were inspired by that Spirit.



There is much more authority given in the Holy Scriptures for the Christian Sabbath than there is for the inclusion of any book into our Holy Bible. At least one man who wrote these books under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit met with and approved the practice of Christians meeting for worship on the first day of the week, namely, Paul at Troas (Acts 20:7); also the same writer exhorted another church as they met on the accustomed first day of the week to raise an offering for the poor of Jerusalem, namely, the Corinthian church (I Cor. 16:1). Another writer tells of his glorious experience when God revealed himself to him on "the Lord's day," Sunday, the first day of the week, namely, John on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:10).

Upon what authority does the Christian Church observe the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath? Upon the authority of the Holy Spirit, the same Authority who guided the Church to accept the sixty-six books of the Bible as our sacred Scriptures.

We accept without question the Holy Bible as God's Word to us; not one of the sacred books within the Scriptures is rejected by the Church today. Why then should there be any question about accepting the Lord's day, the first day of the week, as the Christian Sabbath? This day was accepted as the Christian day of worship on the same authority and by the same spiritually guided Church leaders as accepted the books of the Bible as our sacred writings.

This Christian Sabbath is the memorial of the resurrection of Jesus, who arose on the first day of the week; also of the advent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which was also on the first day of the week—in reality Pentecost marked the birthday of the Christian Church. The first-day Sabbath as the memorial of the resurrection of Jesus preserves the Sabbath principle, that of a day of sacred rest after six days of labor, given at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue. We worship, not on the

seventh day, which is a memorial of the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and can have little significance to us who are not Jews; but on the first day of the week, rejoicing in the finished work of redemption of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and His glorious resurrection.

## CHAPTER SIX

# The Sabbath in the Epistles

Not much is said about the Sabbath in the Epistles of the New Testament. However the few times where it is mentioned it seems to express an attitude of that which is passing and is being replaced with something of greater significance to the Christian Church. It should be noted that never is the Sabbath principle, that of a sacred day of rest and worship after six days of labor, denied or changed; the change is made in the observance of the Sabbath principle to a Sabbath more expressive of the risen Christ and of His work and presence in His Church.

We have noted in the preceding chapter that in the instructions sent out to the Christian churches from the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:28-29) there was no requirement made for the gentile Christians to keep the Jewish Sabbath. In keeping with these written instructions relative to this decision the Apostle Paul did not demand that the converts to Christ under his ministry keep the seventh-day Sabbath. However it should be noted that he did not totally sever himself from Jewish ceremonial practices; for while he worshiped Christ with the other Christians on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), he nevertheless, for the sake of his influence with the Jews, observed some of their ceremonial practices (see Acts 21:27-29).

In writing the Roman Christians the Apostle Paul stressed the failures and limitations of Judaism. He stressed what was the true circumcision (2:27-29); that God is as much the God of the gentiles as He is of the Jews and that He will justify those of the "circumcision"



by faith and also the "uncircumcision" by faith (3:28-30). Relative to the law, he states that the Christian is become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that he should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead (7:4); and as being thus related to Christ, he "should serve in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (v. 6).

There was some disagreement among the Christians regarding foods and the observance of days (14:1-23). Perhaps this relates to matters of conscience in both Jews and gentiles who had become Christians. Some gentile Christians had scruples about eating meats which had been offered to idols (I Corinthians 8), and Christians who had been Jews may have had scruples about eating food which their ceremonial law classified as unclean. Also there was a difference of opinion relative to sacred days, no doubt which day to observe as the Sabbath. It is of particular interest to note that Paul did not condemn these people either regarding the matter of food or relative to the observance of sacred days. One Christian esteemed one sacred day; another Christian esteemed all days alike (v. 5). If the Sabbath is meant here, and many Biblical scholars think it is, Paul does not take a stand personally on the issue. Perhaps we should note that the esteeming of all days alike did not mean the lowering of the Sabbath to the level of secular days; rather it meant the raising of these other days to the rank of the Sabbath—all days became sacred. Paul's insistence is that, whatever day is regarded, these Christians are to regard it as unto the Lord (v. 6), and that every man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind (v. 5).

The appeal made here by Paul is for sympathy and understanding with each other; the Christians were not to be divided over meats and sacred days. When he says, "Every one must be convinced in his own mind," he is not saying that every Christian has the right to think



about these matters just as he pleases. He is stressing that the Christian is responsible to God for his convictions, and he is responsible to Him alone, not to the opinions of others; that in life and death he belongs to God, and that Christ is the Judge. So whether or not the Christian eats meat, whichever day he keeps as the Sabbath, the other Christians must recognize that he is acting upon the conviction he has formed in Christ and he must be respected for this conviction. After all, meats and sacred days are not the important matters. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (v. 17).

In writing to the Colossian church the Apostle Paul discusses what is called "the Colossian heresy." This heresy was an attempt by people within the Church to make Christianity an element in some form of composite religion, taking some Christian teachings, some pagan mythology, and some Jewish practices, such as meats and food, observing festivals and new moons, and the Sabbath, forming them into what Paul called "philosophy and vain deceit" (2:8)—other translations being "a theosophy which is specious make-believe, on the lines of human tradition" (Moffatt), and "intellectualism or high-sounding nonsense" (Phillips).

Without considering the heresy in its various phases we will look at this scripture in relation to the Sabbath (Col. 2:14-17). It is evident that Paul considered the Sabbath here, for he distinctly distinguished a feast day, or a new moon, from a Sabbath day, and this was the order used in the Old Testament (see II Chron. 2:4; 8:13). The Sabbath day is included as part of "the handwriting of ordinances [the ceremonial practices of the Jews] that was against us," which Christ in His death blotted out, taking it away, "nailing it to his cross . . . Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of

the sabbath days [all of which were Jewish festivals]: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

This "handwriting of ordinances," including the Sabbath, was "a shadow"; that is, these ordinances were not worthless or empty, but they, like the law, were a shadow of things to come (Heb. 10:1). There was value in these ancient customs and ordinances; they pointed forward to things to come, things which came in Christ, who is the Substance of all they foreshadowed. In Him alone is found the reality. By a vital spiritual relation with Christ, who has quickened us together with Him and has forgiven us all our trespasses (v. 13), we are made free from the shadow of things to come; we live in the reality of things present, the gracious spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. In this sense the ordinances which include the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals, a shadow of things to come, take their place with things stressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews; they have been fulfilled and are now replaced by the better things found in Christ. Only the shadow is done away; the reality, the better things, the true Substance, which is Christ, remain.

Several things are evident in this statement of Paul to the Colossian Christians. First, the word "sabbath" used here is never used in any passage in the New Testament of any day but the weekly Jewish Sabbath. Second, that Paul did not mean some of the feast days is clearly shown by the fact that in this very statement he distinctly distinguishes a feast day, or a new moon, from a sabbath day. Third, Christians are not to be judged on the basis of the Jewish memorial Sabbath; that is, because of what Christ has done on the Cross, no one, not even the Sabbatarians, are to judge us in regard to the seventh-day Sabbath, which belongs to the shadow and not to Christ. The evidence is conclusive; the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath was fulfilled and done away in the cross of Christ along with the other ceremonial ob-

servances belonging to the ordinances. We now have the better Sabbath, a Sabbath related to Christ, who is the Substance of what was foreshadowed; it is the Lord's day, the memorial of Christ's finished work of redemption and His resurrection—Sunday, the first day of the week.

In the letter to the Galatians the Apostle Paul is answering the attacks of the Judaizers who were unsettling the faith of the Galatian Christians by insisting that to be Christians these gentiles must keep the law, be circumcised, and observe days (the Jewish Sabbath) and months and times and years (4:10). Paul strongly denounces these false teachers (1:8-9). He also stresses with great emphasis that Christians are not saved by the law, i.e., the ordinances of Judaism; these are the "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" (3:24-25)—or to bring us to faith when these laws (the schoolmaster) are no longer needed. This thought is much the same as we saw in the Colossian letter: the ordinances, Sabbath, etc., were the shadow of things to come; the substance is Christ. In the Galatian letter Paul thinks of the Christian who observes these days (including the Jewish Sabbath) as being a servant, not a son of God (4:6-11); he is a child of the bondwoman, but not of the freewoman (vv. 21-23); he has been justified by faith, not by the works of the law, including Sabbath keeping (2:16); he has not received the Spirit by the works of the law (Sabbath keeping), but by the hearing of faith (3:2); he has begun the Christian life in the Spirit, but now by reverting to the keeping of the law, including Sabbath keeping, he would be endeavoring to be made perfect in the flesh (3:3); by seeking to be justified by the law (including Sabbath keeping), he is fallen from grace (5:4).

It is evident in this letter to the Galatians that when Paul writes about the law he is thinking of the same things he mentioned in the Colossian letter, namely, "the



handwriting of ordinances that was against us," which Christ blotted out in His death, taking them away, nailing them to His cross; and these included the Jewish weekly Sabbath—all of which were the shadow of things to come, the substance of which is Christ. In this letter the law, or these ordinances, are called the schoolmaster whose purpose it is to lead us to Christ. Since the law and ordinances—the schoolmaster—have now led us to Christ, they are no longer needed. They are fulfilled in Christ; something new and better has taken their place.

The writer to the Hebrews mentioned the Sabbath rest of creation and the Christian rest in Christ (4:1-11). Dr. H. Orton Wiley says: "With the resurrection of Christ began the Sabbath of the Son; and because a sabbatism requires that after every six days of activity one day of rest must be devoted to our heavenly calling, the Christian has reckoned the seventh day, not from the Sabbath of creation, but from the Sabbath of the Son, who arose on the first day of the week. The Christian Sabbath, frequently called the Lord's day, takes on great significance. In itself it is not only an institution set up as a memorial of God's rest after the finished work of creation, but celebrated on a new day it becomes also a memorial of the finished work of Christ in redemption" (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 150).

The New Testament, largely within the Epistles, emphasizes the many changes which Jesus made in the religious life for Christians over that of Judaism. Some of these changes are: baptism is substituted for circumcision as the initial sign of entering the covenant; the Lord's Supper replaces the Passover as the feast of God's people, stressing their dependence upon God for salvation; there is a new Israel with a new covenant, the covenant of the inner life of the Holy Spirit; a new High Priest, Jesus, our Saviour; a new sacrifice, the Lamb of God, with a better blood of the covenant; a new

heavenly sanctuary in place of the old Tabernacle and Temple; a new and living way into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, replacing the Old Testament sacrifices and limited approach to God's presence; a new Sabbath, the Lord's day, the first day of the week, a memorial of Christ's redemptive work and resurrection, replacing the seventh-day Sabbath of the Jews, which was a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and is related to the covenant of the law and ordinances with Israel—all of which can have no significance whatsoever to the Christian, for they are the shadow of the substance, which is Christ.

Does it not seem strange that with all of these changes—and there are many more—which Christ brought to His people, only one, namely, the Sabbath, has been strongly contested by some Christians, the Sabbatarians? But a change of Sabbath is as necessary to the Christian faith and life as are the other changes mentioned. Jesus completely fulfilled the purposes of the Jewish or seventh-day Sabbath as much as He fulfilled the shadow of the other festivals, ordinances, and ceremonies of old Israel.

So within the Epistles when any mention is made of the Sabbath, always the interpretation requires a reference to the fulfillment and abolishment of the seventh-day Sabbath of the Jews in favor of the Christian Sabbath, the memorial of the resurrection of our Lord, the Lord's day, the first day of the week, Sunday.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# The First Day of the Week

The Sabbath principle given by God at creation and confirmed in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue is a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, or "the sanctity of every seventh day, at whatever time the cycle may commence." In previous chapters we have noted that the cycle for the Jewish Sabbath began at a time after their deliverance from Egypt (Exod. 12:1-2; 13:3-4; 16:10-31). Also we noted that this Jewish Sabbath was a memorial and a sign of a perpetual covenant between God and the children of Israel forever (Deut. 5:12-15; Exod. 31:13-17). Further we have noted that this Jewish memorial Sabbath, with the Jewish feasts and ceremonies, was a "shadow of things to come," and that these were fulfilled by Jesus, for He nailed these ordinances to His cross.

Early in the history of the Christian Church the believers observed some form of worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). Although, as we have noted, the leaders of the Church of the New Testament times were Jews, and hence they continued to worship in Jewish synagogues, however it is evident that mainly the purpose of their meeting in the synagogue was to bring the gospel "to the Jew first." But even among the Christians of that early day there seemed to be some division concerning the day of worship, as is indicated by Paul's statement to the Roman Christians (Rom. 14:4-6). But beyond question, worship by Christians on the first day of the week can be traced to the night of the resurrection of Jesus, when He met with His disciples, and again on the first day of the next week. Let us look at some statements found in the



writings of the leaders of the Early Church near to the time of the apostles.

The three outstanding church leaders, successors to the apostles were Clement of Rome, "who," says Irenaeus, "had seen the blessed apostles and conversed with them, and had the preaching of the blessed apostles still sounding in his ears"; Ignatius of Antioch, said by Eusebius to have been a disciple of St. John; and Polycarp of Smyrna, of whom Irenaeus says, "I can tell the place where the blessed Polycarp sat and taught and how he related his conversations with John and others who has seen the Lord." Later, in the second century, the Christian leaders were: Justin Martyr, who was prominent in the church at Rome; Irenaeus of Lyons of South France; Clement of Alexandria (Egypt); and Tertullian of northern Africa. These leaders from widely separated places have left testimonies relative to the Christian's Sabbath being on Sunday, the first day of the week. A few examples of quotations from these and other Early Church leaders are now given.

Barnabas, the companion of the Apostle Paul, is quoted as saying, "We observe the eighth day with gladness, in which Jesus rose from the dead, and having manifested Himself to His disciples, He ascended into heaven."

The *Didache*, known also as *Teachings of the Twelve Apostles*, dating close to the time of the apostles, before A.D. 100, has this statement: "But on the Lord's day do ye assemble and break bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions, in order that your sacrifices may be pure."

Ignatius wrote at the beginning of the second century: "Let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection day, the queen and chief of all days. . . . No longer sabbatizing, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which our life sprang forth."

Justin Martyr, about A.D. 145, wrote a book in the form of a dialogue with a Jew, Trypho, telling him of Jesus in order to win him to the Christian faith. In response to Trypho's taunt that the Christians had no festivals or Sabbaths, Justin clearly claims that Sunday is the new Sabbath. "On the day called the day of the Sun [Sunday]," Justin says, "a gathering takes place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, so long as the time permits. Then the reader stops and the leader impresses by word of mouth, and urges the imitation of these good things." In writing to Emperor Antonius, Justin is quoted as saying, "On Sunday we all assemble in common, since that is the first day, . . . the same day our Saviour Jesus Christ rose from the dead."

Irenaeus in A.D. 167 said, "On the Lord's day every one of us Christians keep the Sabbath, meditating on the law, and rejoicing in the works of God."

Clement wrote in A.D. 192, "A Christian according to the command of the gospel observes the Lord's day, thereby glorifying the resurrection of the Lord. The eighth day is the Lord's day." He is quoted also as saying, "The old seventh day has become nothing more than a working day."

Tertullian says in A.D. 200, "Sundays we give to joy, we observe the day of the Lord's resurrection, free from every hindrance of anxiety and duty, laying aside our worldly business lest we give place to the devil." He is further quoted as saying, "The Lord's day is the holy day of the Christian Church. We have nothing to do with the Sabbath. The Lord's day is the Christian's solemnity."

Eusebius, the first Christian Church historian, writing at the beginning of the fourth century said, "The Word [Christ] by the new covenant translated and transferred the feast of the sabbath to the morning light, and

gave as the symbol of true rest—namely, the Lord's day—the first day of the light in which the Saviour . . . obtained victory over death, etc. On this day . . . we assemble, after an interval of six days, and celebrate the holy spiritual sabbath, even all nations redeemed by Him throughout the world assemble and do those things according to the spiritual law which was decreed for the priests to do on the [Jewish] Sabbath. . . . All things whatever that it was their duty to do on the sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's day, as more appropriate to it, because it has the precedence, and is the first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath. It is traditionally handed down to us, that we should meet together on this day."

There can be no confusion here. These writers call the Lord's day the first day of the week, and this is a memorial of the Ressurrection. Also the Lord's day is called Sunday, which is the seventh day, a day of worship, after six days of toil. Here is the application of the Sabbath principle—a sacred day of rest after six days of toil, revealed at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue—to the Christian cycle. This tranference of the Sabbath cycle is as much the work of God in His dealings with the Christian Church as it was His work to establish the Sabbath cycle in Israel with the giving of the manna, as we have seen.

Constantine, the Roman emperor, became a Christian and in A.D. 321 made Sunday the civil Sabbath of the empire, by issuing the following edict:

Let all of the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades rest on the venerable day of the sun; but let those who are situated in the country, freely and at full liberty attend to the business of agriculture; because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn and planting vines; lest, the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted by Heaven. Given the seventh day of March, Crispus and Constantine being consuls, each of them for the second time.



It is claimed that by this edict Constantine changed the Sabbath from the seventh day (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday). From the reading of this edict it is evident that such a claim is baseless. The evidence is conclusive that Constantine merely recognized a prevailing Christian practice of worship on Sunday, the Christian memorial Sabbath, or the Lord's day, a practice observed since the days of the apostles. Constantine did not originate the first-day Sabbath.

An illustration of this fact is found in the observance of the national Thanksgiving Day in the United States. Since the days of the Pilgrim fathers the annual Thanksgiving Day has been observed to some degree. Several times by presidential proclamation the entire nation observed national Thanksgiving; more frequently it was observed through proclamation of the governors of the different states. It was President Lincoln in 1864 who started the present custom of the annual presidential proclamation for a national Thanksgiving Day. Did President Lincoln start Thanksgiving Day? No! Nor did Constantine, the emperor, change the Sabbath. They both put official sanction upon a custom regularly observed for several centuries prior to their proclamations.

The testimonies of the Early Church leaders give evidence that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Sabbath principle given at creation and confirmed in the Decalogue is preserved in a new cycle with a new memorial: the first day of the week, Sunday, a memorial of our Lord's resurrection. The Christian memorial Sabbath, Sunday, is no more of human origin than is the New Testament canon a strictly human arrangement. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Christian Sabbath was recognized and accepted on exactly the same basis and by the same outstanding church leaders as the New Testament was recognized and accepted as the Christian scriptural message. Sunday is the Christian memorial Sabbath.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# The Christian Sabbath

We started this discussion with asking the question, "What is the true Sabbath?" The answer we have found from the Scriptures is that at the completion of six days of creation God, the Creator, rested on the seventh day, establishing the principle of the Sabbath, that of a day of rest after six days of labor. God blessed the seventh day, making it a special blessing to man, or, as Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man," i.e., for the benefit and help of man. God also hallowed or sanctified the seventh day of creation, placing it in a special relation to himself, something to be kept holy.

We have seen from the Scriptures how the Sabbath principle was adapted by God to His people Israel as a definite part of His covenant made with them, and that the cycle of the Sabbath with Israel began with the giving of the manna (Exodus 16); that later God in the Decalogue said, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy," that is, "Keep in remembrance that the Sabbath day is holy unto the Lord." The Sabbath became a sign of the covenant between God and His chosen people. "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Exod. 31:17); as a memorial of the deliverance from their bondage in Egypt (Deut. 5:12-15); and as a day of rest in remembrance of God's rest in creation (Exod. 20:11)—a day to be kept sacred or holy (Exod. 20:8). This Sabbath was Israel's special memorial day and it cannot have universal significance unless all people of the world become Israelites. Even if this should happen, the laws and ceremonies connected with the Jewish Sabbath could be observed only within a limited

geographical area. Since one of these restrictions was the prohibition of making fire on the Sabbath, it could not become a world-wide or universal Sabbath.

We have seen also that it is impossible to trace a consecutive history of the Sabbath from Adam to Moses; that Israel knew nothing about the Sabbath until it was introduced to them by God at the time when He gave them manna in the wilderness; and that the seventh day of Israel's Sabbath observance is not the same as the seventh day of the week of the Gregorian calendar in use today. In fact the Jews today recognize that "the modern Jewish calendar seems to have been inaugurated in 363 A.D., and Rabbi Hillel appears to have modified it by introducing some innovations" (*Jewish Encyclopedia*). It appears that the observance of Saturday as Sabbath by the Jews dates no farther back than the fourth century after Christ. Hence the Sabbath of the Old Testament, including that stated in the Decalogue, can have no special significance to Christians today.

We saw how the principle of the Sabbath stated in creation was preserved and adapted to a new memorial, that of the finished redemptive work of Jesus in His resurrection on the first day of the week; also of His sending the Holy Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost, which was the first day of the week; and that this new day of worship became the Christian Sabbath, often called "the Lord's day." This Christian Sabbath is not a continuation of the old Jewish memorial Sabbath, that belonged to the "shadow of things to come" which were fulfilled by Jesus on the Cross; hence the Jewish Sabbath is not binding on Christians and they should let no man judge them in respect to Sabbath days (Col. 2:14-17).

The Christian Sabbath is a new covenant day; the Jewish Sabbath was an old covenant day. The old covenant was a legal system in which men served in bondage to that law, in "the oldness of the letter." The new covenant is a love system; God's laws are put in the



heart and written in the mind (Heb. 10:16), and men serve God in the "newness of spirit." The Sabbath principle of creation, a sacred day of rest after six days of labor, belongs to the new covenant. We have our new-covenant memorial Sabbath; but it is to be observed in "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not . . . with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

We have seen that through the leadership of the Holy Spirit, who Jesus said would lead the Church into all truth, the first day of the week, Sunday, became the universal day of worship for the Christian Church; and we have given statements from the writings of church leaders from the days of the apostles which stress that Sunday, the Lord's day, the first day of the week, has been the historical day of worship of the Christian Church. This Christian Sabbath is suitable to universal observation. People of all climes, times, conditions, and places can observe the Christian Sabbath, the memorial of our Lord's resurrection.

The answer to our question, "What is the true Sabbath?" is that Sunday, the first day of the week, is as much the true Sabbath for Christians as the seventh day was the memorial Sabbath for Israel. In this Christian Sabbath the Sabbath principle given by God in creation is preserved with its blessing and sacredness, and it is adapted to the fitting memorial of the resurrection of Jesus. Sunday is the true Sabbath of the Christians, scripturally and historically, and it has been blessed of God down through the Christian centuries as a day of worship acceptable to Him.

The Sabbatarians who delight to confuse conscientious Christians with their insistence upon the seventh-day Sabbath are misled because they misread the fourth commandment of the Decalogue. They read that commandment with these mental insertions: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. [*The first*] Six days [*of the week*] shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

but the seventh day [*of the week*] is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work . . . for in [*the first*] six days [*of the week*] the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day [*of the week*]: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day [*the seventh day of the week*], and hallowed it" (Exod. 20:8-11).

But this is misreading the commandment. It says, "Six days"—without any relation to their location in the week—"shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day"—not of the week, but after six days of labor—"is the sabbath of the Lord thy God." This commandment states clearly the principle of the Sabbath given in creation but it does not designate any day of the week as the Sabbath. The Sabbath principle, a day of rest after six days of labor, was designated in Israel as the seventh day of their week, a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt. This same Sabbath principle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has been given to the Christian Church as Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord's day.

Let us not be misled by the Sabbatarians. There are many good people who have been deceived by their teachings; but let us be content to follow the teachings of the Christian Church guided by the Holy Spirit in establishing the Sabbath on the first day of the week, the Lord's day, as the true day for Christian worship; just as much as we accept without question the Spirit's guidance of the same Church in giving us the Holy Bible, which we read and use as God's Word.

How are we to observe the Christian Sabbath? Jesus stressed that the Sabbath was made for man's benefit, not for his bondage, as the Pharisees taught; that on the Sabbath we are to do good and that works of necessity are permissible. Through His resurrection we have a risen Saviour, a living religion, a triumphant salvation. The memorial of this day of the Resurrection, the Chris-

tian Sabbath, is not to deteriorate into a day of legalism; it is a day of rejoicing, a day for joyful Christian worship and service. We observe this day from a loving heart in which is written the law of God.

It is the Lord's day, the memorial of His triumphant resurrection. On this day we give special honor and homage to Him. We refrain from doing things which would hinder us in giving our very best to Him in worship and praise. We cease from our regular activities for physical refreshment, mental relaxation, and spiritual edification. The Lord's day is symbolic of that eternal sabbath, when all creation shall rest from its struggles and the whole universe shall "crown Him Lord of all." We can do no better than to follow Ignatius' statement to Christians in A.D. 101: "Let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection day, the queen and chief of all days. . . . No longer sabbatizing, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which our life sprang forth."