

WHAT IS THE
CHRISTIAN'S
SABBATH ?

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"For I have not spoken of Myself, but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak."— John 12:49,50.

UPPERMOST in the mind and heart of every devoted follower of Jesus should be an earnest desire to know and to do the divine will. As the Master so clearly states, God's will is expressed through Him, and we are therefore to recognise Him to be the living Word of God. The Master's new commandment of love (John 13:34) encompasses everything else He enjoined upon His disciples, motivating them in their zeal and determination to be faithful to every detail of God's will as He revealed and exemplified it. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," wrote Paul. (Rom.13:10) That is true of God's law as given to the Israelites through Moses, and it is also true of the laws of God which apply specifically to Christians.—Deut.6:5; Lev.19:18; Gal.5:14.

For more than three years our Lord taught His chosen apostles, preparing them to be the teachers of all who believed on Him through faulty and oft-erring men. Realising their human limitations, and the inability of the natural mind to discern spiritual truths, Jesus explained that He had yet many things to say to them but that they were then unprepared to receive them. He then promised to send the holy spirit of truth to guide them into all truth and to show them things to come. John 16:13.

From this statement we are fully justified in accepting the teachings of the apostles as

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also being the commandments of Jesus, and of God. Indeed, Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth should be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt.18:18.) This authority has never been delegated to others than the apostles; hence, in our present examination of the commandments of Jesus we shall endeavor to distinguish between the commandments which are binding upon Christians because of the divine authority which is behind them, and those which represent merely the opinions of men.

For example, for centuries nearly the entire professed Christian world has observed the first day of the week as a sabbath of rest, and has employed this day as a time for private and public worship. But there is a group of earnest students of the Bible who insist that a Christian cannot be wholly pleasing to God unless he observes the seventh day of the week as a sabbath of rest, as was enjoined upon the nation of Israel in the law given to them at Mt. Sinai. In the minds of these zealous people, this matter looms so important that they make it a test of acceptance into their particular group, in the belief that salvation will be denied to all who do not refrain from work on the seventh day of the week. But is the keeping of the seventh day of the week as a day of rest and worship one of the commandments of Jesus?

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Let us first examine, briefly, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Did He say anything in this sermon about keeping the seventh-day sabbath? No! He opens the discourse by setting forth the Beatitudes— "Blessed are the poor in spirit.....Blessed are they that mourn.... Blessed are the meek....Blessed are they which

do hunger and thirst after righteousness.... Blessed are the merciful....Blessed are the pure in heart....Blessed are the peacemakersBlessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake."—Matt.5:1-10.

If keeping the seventh day is so vitally important that it is essential to salvation, one might wonder why Jesus did not here refer to it. If salvation is dependent upon keeping the seventh day, how blessed indeed are they who keep it, and how appropriate it would have been for the Master to have said, "Blessed are they who remember the seventh-day sabbath to keep it holy; for no others will ever see eternal life!" But He didn't!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus touched upon many details of Christian living—domestic relationship, the taking of human life, loving our enemies, prayer, etc.—but said nothing about the sabbath. True the Master does not in this sermon set forth all the essentials of the Christian life. He says nothing, for example, about belief in His atoning blood, although elsewhere He does. He said, for instance, that unless one ate His flesh and drank His blood he could have no life in him. (John 6:53.) But nowhere in all of His teachings does Jesus enjoin upon His followers the necessity of keeping the seventh-day sabbath.

No mention is made of the sabbath in any of Jesus' parables. He says nothing about it in His explanation of some of the parables. When His enemies accused Him of violating the law by healing the sick on the sabbath, He declared, that "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (John 5:17.) Regardless of what explanation we place upon this reply to the Jews, it certainly cannot be used to strengthen the arguments of those who insist that keeping the seventh-day sabbath is essential

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to salvation. If such were the case, what an excellent opportunity this was for the Master to say so!

On one occasion the mother of two of the disciples requested of Him that her boys sit one on His right hand and one on His left hand in the Kingdom. He asked if they were able to drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. (Matt.20:20-24.) Why did He not add, "And keep the seventh-day sabbath"? Evidently it was because He did not consider this one of the requirements to be met by those who will be blessed by a share in His Kingdom reign.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Our Saviour's last words on earth are sometimes called, "The Great Commission." Shortly before Jesus left His disciples and returned to the heavenly courts, He said to them, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Matt.28:19,20.

Here again we find no mention of the seventh-day sabbath. Nor can we assume that it is included in the statement, "whatsoever I have commanded you," for as we have seen, nowhere in any of the Master's teachings did He make this one of His commandments. Honesty in handling the Word of God compels us to conclude, therefore, that so far as the direct and personal commandments of Jesus are concerned, they do not stress seventh-day sabbath keeping as essential to salvation.

A PROMISE FULFILLED

The holy spirit came upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost in fulfilment of the promise Jesus had made to them. Under the en-

lightenment of the spirit they began their ministry. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached his first spirit-inspired sermon, but said nothing about keeping the seventh-day sabbath. (Acts 2.) A little later he preached another sermon, outlining the work of Christ following His second advent. Again he says nothing about the seventh-day sabbath.—Acts 3:20-23.

Throughout the Book of Acts we find many outstanding testimonies by the apostles and others—some to the Jews as a people; some to their rulers; some to individual civil rulers of the day—but in none of these is there any mention whatsoever of the necessity of observing the seventh-day sabbath. The martyr Stephen didn't mention it, nor Paul, the Apostle—either in the telling witnesses he gave before Felix, Festus and Agrippa, or in his testimony to the Jews in Jerusalem, or to the Greeks on Mars' Hill. To the last mentioned he said that God had commanded all men everywhere to repent and had given assurance of a coming judgment day; but he said nothing about the sabbath.—Acts 17:30,31.

A CHURCH ISSUE SETTLED.

One of the vital issues which confronted the early church was how to deal with the Gentile converts to Christ who were seeking fellowship among Christians of Jewish birth. The Jewish converts themselves, many of them "babes in Christ," were having their own difficulties in realising their full freedom in Christ. The Gentile issue became so serious that a conference of the apostles and other believers was held at Jerusalem at which the matter was extensively discussed and conclusions drawn.—1 Cor.3:1; Rom.2:20; Acts 15:1-10.

And what was the full statement of the

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apostolic edict which went out from this conference to all Gentile converts pertaining to their responsibility in coming among Jewish Christians? Here it is: "For it seemed good to the holy spirit, 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." — Acts 15:28,29.

Shall we charge the apostles with neglecting to mention one of the NECESSARY things when delivering this message to the Gentiles? Surely not! Yet, certainly here was the logical place to mention the sabbath if it was in any way considered an essential part of the Law which Gentiles should observe. Abstaining from fornication is a moral obligation binding upon all Christians at all times, but sabbath keeping is not a part of the moral law.

Neither is there a moral issue in the matter of eating meat offered to idols, or eating blood or things strangled. But the Gentiles, who saw no wrong in doing these things and who evidently continued in them after becoming Christians, were an offense to their Jewish brethren, and it was for this reason that they were counseled to abstain. But even so, as Paul later pointed out, it was those who were weak in the faith who were being stumbled. Those who had sufficient faith to claim their full liberty in Christ knew that offering meat to idols did not actually defile it, but it might be the means of loss to others for whom also Jesus had died. Therefore to forego one's liberty in this respect was proof of his love for the weaker brethren. Rom.14:13-21; 15:1; 1 Cor.8:7-13.

ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD.

Paul's epistles, as well as his sermons, omit all mention of the necessity of keeping the seventh-day sabbath. This is the more remarkable in view of the fact that according to his own words he had "not shunned to declare...all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27) It is impossible to reach any other conclusion from this than that seventh-day sabbath keeping is not a part of the counsel of God for Christians.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom.1:16.) Our seventh-day friends would add: "Very true, but it is also essential that we keep the sabbath." Paul, however, did not choose to append any such condition to the Gospel, for the very obvious reason that he did not consider it a part of the "counsel of God."

In the Book of Romans, Paul does touch upon the Law of which the sabbath commandment was a part; not to impose that Law upon the Christian but to emphasize that faith in and obedience to the Gospel makes one free from it. He writes: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the Law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him, raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.... But now we are delivered from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the Law: for I had not known lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet."—Rom.7:4,6,7.

The commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" is one of the Ten Commandments, of which the

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sabbath commandment is another, so there can be absolutely no question what Law that Paul refers to as the one to which Christians are dead. We wish to emphasize this point because the claim is that the Law not now binding upon Christians is the ceremonial Law, not the Law of the Ten Commandments. But Paul does not agree with this!

Romans 8:1 declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." In addition to being in Christ, and walking after the spirit, why did not Paul add that "no condemnation" also depends upon keeping the seventh-day sabbath? Evidently because it was not a part of "all the counsel of God."

Beginning with the 12th chapter of Romans, the apostle sets forth one detail after another of what is involved in walking after the spirit, and proving what is that "good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2) He bids us be humble, loving, and kind; to return good for evil; to be subject to the higher powers; and explains many other essential details of the Christian life, but he says nothing about keeping the sabbath.

On the contrary the apostle, cautioning the brethren not to judge one another, wrote: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."— Rom. 14:5,6.

Two points should be observed in this argument. One is that the apostle places the ob-

serving of one day above another in the same category of importance as eating meat that had been offered to the idols. The other is that he does not condemn those who esteem EVERYDAY alike. Regardless of the reason some of the converted Jews in Rome may have had for esteeming one day above another, certainly those who considered that every day was alike to them as Christians, did not consider seventh-day sabbath keeping essential. And certainly the apostle Paul did not think so either, else he would have sounded a timely warning to them.

THINGS WHICH ABIDE

Paul wrote two letters to the church at Corinth, but in neither does he write a word about keeping the seventh-day sabbath. In the first letter he points out the evil of sectarianism in the church, calls for excommunication of a fornicator, and explains that women are not to be teachers in the church. In the 12th chapter he outlines the working arrangements of The Christ, in which Jesus and His church are likened to the head and body of a human organism.

In the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians the apostle emphasizes the fundamental importance of love as a governing principle in the Christian life. Gifts of the spirit were to vanish away, he wrote, and so will the limited knowledge of this life, but faith, hope and love shall abide. If the seventh-day sabbath is an eternal principle in the law of God, obedience to which is essential to salvation, why did the apostle fail to say so? Surely, when he wrote, "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three," he could easily have added, "and the sabbath," but he didn't!

AN APPROVED MINISTRY

Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians

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deals largely with the church's share in the "ministry of reconciliation." Chapter 3 verse 3, likens the members of the church to the tables of stone upon which the Law was written at Mt. Sinai, and says that God's Law is now being written in the hearts by the spirit of God instead of upon tables of stone.

The writing of God's Law in our hearts is in order that we may serve as "able ministers of the new covenant," the apostle shows. The new covenant, he explains, will give life to those who are blessed by it through the ministry of the church; but the old covenant, "written and engraven in stones," brought death, although it was ordained by God to give life. There was a glory attached to the ministration of death under the old covenant; but this glory is done away with, the apostle explains, and the church has a hope of still greater glory as associates of Jesus in the ministration of life.

Notice, in this lesson, that it is the covenant, "written and engraven in stones," which is "done away." It was the Ten Commandments which were engraven in stones, not the so-called ceremonial Law of Israel. And this writing was done by God on both the first and the second sets of stone tablets. Thus we see, that while Paul does not here specifically mention the seventh-day sabbath, he does show that the entire Decalogue, a part of the basis of the old Law Covenant, is superseded by the church, which, during this age, is being prepared as the instructor of the world under the new covenant. Certainly then, there is no authority here for imposing the seventh-day sabbath commandment upon Christians.

As members of the church of Christ, we are "workers together" with God, serving in the "ministry of reconciliation," and Paul admon-

ishes us not to give offense in anything, "that the ministry be not blamed." (2 Cor. 6:1; 5:18; 6:3) He adds that in all things we should seek to approve ourselves "as ministers of God." (2 Cor. 6:4.) Then he lists the "all things" as follows: "By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the holy spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true."—2 Cor. 6:6-8.

These are the qualifications Paul sets forth for the approved ministers of God. A number of other points are mentioned in the chapter, but seventh-day sabbath keeping is omitted. To us it seems wholly unlikely that this is an oversight by the great apostle. No, let us rather conclude that this inspired servant of God, who hesitated not to declare all His counsel, omitted to mention sabbath keeping as a credential of the ministry for the reason that it is not one of them—except as it is made so by fallible men and not by the Lord and His specially chosen apostles.

OBSERVING DAYS AND MONTHS

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he not only fails to enjoin seventh-day sabbath keeping upon the church, but wrote that he was afraid of the Christian standing of those who observe "days, and months, and times, and years." (Gal. 4:10, 11.) Well criticizing this group of Christians because they wanted still to be under the Law covenant—of which observing "days, and months, and times, and years" was a part—he wrote, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"—Gal. 3:1.

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In this epistle Paul explains that the original promise of life through Christ was given to Abraham, when God said to him that through his "seed" all the families of the earth were to be blessed. The Law, Paul writes, which was added "four hundred and thirty years after," could not disannul or make void that original covenant. "It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." (Gal.3:16-19) If the Law was added until the seed should come, why should it be necessary, now that the "seed" has come, to continue under the Law?

Our seventh-day friends will argue that the sabbath had always been observed, that while it was one of the Ten Commandments given at Mt. Sinai, yet it was not "added" in the sense of being something new. But they have assumed this! There isn't a single text of Scripture which so states. We are told that Enoch walked with God, but nothing is said about his keeping the seventh-day sabbath. The same is true of the other faithful patriarchs—Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

If it was the custom for these ancient worthies to keep the sabbath, one would think that in the historical accounts of their activities and journeyings some mention would be made of their stopping here or there until the sabbath was past. But no such statement is found anywhere in the sacred records.

Exodus, chapter twelve, verse 16, explains that in connection with the passover celebration both the first and the seventh days of the first month were to be rest days. There is no hint in the Scriptures of rest days previous to this. Yes, the sabbath-day commandment, like the remainder of the Law, was "added" at Sinai, and like the entire Law covenant of which it was a part, was to continue only until the "seed should come."

In Jeremiah 31:32, God refers to the covenant which He made with Israel in the day when He took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt, and 'a part of the Law covenant was introduced at that time. The sabbath was brought to their attention in connection with the giving of the manna. The Israelites' apparent surprise in finding an extra quantity of manna on the sixth day, and that it would not spoil on the seventh day, is strong evidence that the seventh-day rest was a new experience for them.—Exod.16:21-27.

In Deuteronomy 5:15 Moses writes: "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the sabbath day." Here Moses explains one of the reasons the sabbath was given to Israel. They had been slaves in Egypt, and doubtless were given no rest periods at all, so the law of the sabbath was one means by which God demonstrated His loving interest in them. This also became a sign of a higher "rest," a rest by faith in Christ, from the cruel taskmaster of sin, as later we shall see.

When Moses told the Israelites of the Lord's instructions concerning the building of the tabernacle, he reminded them of the law of the sabbath. (Exod.35:2.) He wanted them to realise that even in their work of building the tabernacle, they were to rest on the seventh day. In this, too, there is strong circumstantial evidence that heretofore they had not known about the sabbath, and were not accustomed to keeping it.

THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS

In Ephesians 2:15, Paul tells us that Christ has abolished the "law of commandments." The

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King James Version adds the word "contained" in translating the remainder of this text, making it read, "contained in ordinances." Our Seventh Day Adventist friends have seized upon this to prove that it was merely the ordinances of the Law that were abolished by Christ. Certainly, the ordinances of the Law were abolished, and it should be remembered that sabbath keeping is an ordinance, and judging from what we find in the remainder of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul so considered it. He admonishes the brethren at Ephesus to put off lying, stealing, hatred (which Jesus explains is murder), fornication, covetousness and idolatry. He bids the young in the congregation to honor their parents, which he says is the "first commandment with promise."—Eph. 4:25-32; 5:3-5; 6:1,2.

As we have already noted, the moral law of God never changes, and from the above we can see that Paul is alluding to the moral principles set forth in the Ten Commandments; but he fails to mention the sabbath commandment. The only logical conclusion we can come to is that he considered the law of the sabbath a ceremonial, not a moral requirement, hence a part of that covenant arrangement which had been abolished by Christ.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW

Paul's epistle to the Philippians says nothing about seventh-day sabbath keeping. He does, however, discredit the righteousness which he endeavored to obtain under the Law covenant, and stresses the fact that only through Christ can a Christian attain that for which he has been apprehended of God. For his own part, he was forgetting those things which were behind—his standing under the Law as a Pharisee—and pressing forward to win the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Concerning this great aim of

his Christian life he said, "This one thing I do."—Phil.3:3-14.

In the closing chapter of Philippians, Paul writes, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you."—Phil.4:8,9.

If seventh-day sabbath keeping is so vitally essential to salvation as is claimed by some, it is difficult to understand why the Apostle Paul continues to ignore the matter, as we can see he does. In the above quotation from Philippians we have another final exhortation concerning important things to think about and to do, but no mention of the sabbath.

Paul admonishes the brethren to follow the things they had been taught, even as he was doing, but there is no evidence in the Scriptures that Paul was a seventh-day sabbath keeper. True, he visited Jewish synagogues on the sabbath, but this was because he knew he would find devout Jews in the synagogues on these days to whom he could witness for the truth. In fact, Paul was so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his Lord and Master that he utilized every means at his disposal and every opportunity afforded him for witnessing to the truth, whether it was on the first day or any other day of the week.—1 Cor.9:18-23.

LET NO MAN JUDGE YOU

In Colossians 2:16, Paul writes: "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' added by translators)." This is the only reference to

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the sabbath in Paul's letter to the Colossians, and from it we learn that the apostle did not consider the keeping of it essential to salvation. True, there were other sabbaths observed by Israel in addition to the seventh-day sabbath. There were the yearly "holy" days; and also the "new moon," or monthly holy days. The "sabbath" mentioned by Paul is therefore definitely the weekly seventh day rest period, the keeping of which was not to be considered a basic Christian requirement. He further shows in this same connection that these are but "a shadow of things to come, but the body (the important thing) is of Christ."

In this letter to the Colossians, as well as in his other epistles, while Paul stresses the fact that the law was nailed to the cross (Col.2:14), he reiterates the importance of adhering to its moral requirements. Some of these he mentions in chapter 3, verse 5, referring to covetousness as idolatry, which was forbidden by the "law of commandments." (Eph.2:15.) The fact that he singles out these moral requirements of the law, and discounts the importance of seventh-day sabbath keeping, proves our contention that the sabbath commandment was considered by God merely an adjunct for the benefit of man and not to be considered in the same light as those moral ordinances.

PAUL EXHORTS THE THESSALONIANS

In neither of his letters to the church at Thessalonica does Paul mention seventh-day sabbath keeping. Both of these epistles deal to a considerable extent with the subject of Christ's second coming. The apostle explains that the "brethren" would not be in darkness that the day of the Lord should overtake them "as a thief in the night." He explains that this was because they were the children of the

day, and hence were awake and watchful. Then follows his exhortation to those awake and alert. We quote: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."—1 Thes.5:14-22.

How easy it would have been had Paul thought it essential, to have added to this exhortation, "Be sure to rest on the seventh day!" True, he does not here mention all the important things pertaining to the Christian life; but when we consider that not only here, but in all of his epistles, he persistently fails to enjoin seventh-day sabbath keeping, our only conclusion must be that it is not an essential!

NEITHER GIVE HEED TO FABLES

In Paul's two letters to Timothy exhorting him as a teacher in the church, he writes not a single word about sabbath keeping. He does urge Timothy not to give heed to fables, and then adds, "Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart." (1 Tim.1:5.) There were those in the early church who insisted that one or more items of the Law be imposed upon the believers, and Paul is here evidently referring to the teachings of those who included fables and "endless genealogies" along with the "law of commandments."—Titus 1:14.

Paul continues, "We know that the Law is good, if a man use it lawfully." And how is

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the Law to be used "lawfully"? Paul explains, saying, "Knowing this that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners," etc. (1 Tim.1:8-10.) Here is an important consideration. Christians who have devoted themselves entirely to the service of the Lord, and who are endeavoring to set their affections upon things above, should be living above the necessity of the "law of commandments."—Eph.2:15.

Thus we see, that even in his instructions to an outstanding teacher in the church, Paul refrains from enjoining the necessity of seventh-day sabbath keeping, which is further evidence that this great and inspired apostle in the church did not consider it an essential of Christian doctrine. He mentioned the perilous times of these "last days" when men would be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," and wrote that he did not permit a woman to teach in the church—something very common in our times—but omitted all mention of the sabbath.— 2 Tim.3:1,4; 1 Tim.2:12.

GOD'S SABBATH

In Paul's letters to Titus and Philemon he likewise fails to mention the sabbath question. In his letter to the Hebrews, however, he does mention the sabbath, but not in a way to support the seventh-day sabbath keeper's position. The first eleven verses of the fourth chapter deal with the subject in detail, and the tenth verse sums up the matter saying, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

This is a very important point because the claim is that the seventh-day sabbath is and always will be binding upon the Lord's people because this day was made sacred when God

rested from His creative work. God's sabbath is sacred, and here the apostle explains what it really should mean to a Christian. It is not the keeping of a seventh-day sabbath; it is, rather, a rest by faith in the finished work of Christ.

And this is in keeping with the Old Testament Scriptures, where we are told that the sabbath was given to Israel for a "sign." (Exod.20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-17.) It was, or should have been a sign, or token—had their faith in God been able to grasp it—of His ability to care for all their needs. When they refrained from working on the seventh day, they refrained from that which helped to provide their living, and this became a picture, or type, of a far more important rest for Christians.

For centuries the Israelites struggled to obtain everlasting life under the Law, because the promise was that if a man would do these things he would live by them. (Lev.18:5; Rom.10:5; Gal.3:12.) We know that they all failed, not because the Law was imperfect, but because it was beyond the ability of any member of the fallen race to keep. But with the coming of Christ, there was opened up "a new and living way," not a new way of works under the Law, but a way of faith—a faith which enables the consecrated believer to cease depending upon works to obtain life, and to accept the provision of life made for him by God through the blood of Jesus Christ. —Heb.10:20; Rom.3:20; 5: 1,2.

This is the real "sabbath" or "rest" enjoyed by the Christian. And it is not merely on the seventh day of the week, but on every day of the week. This is the meaning of God's rest to us. When God finished the original work of creation He ceased His efforts on be-

half of the human race. The perfect pair which He created and put in Eden transgressed His law and came under condemnation to death, but the Creator has entrusted the entire redemptive programme, whereby the race is to be restored to life, to the hands of His Son who became the Redeemer, and who will yet be the restorer of all who believe on Him when they are given a full opportunity to do so.

And how much more understandable and reasonable this is than to suppose that God now literally rests on each seventh-day of the week, and that Christians, by resting on that day, are resting at the same time God is at rest! Seventh-day sabbath keepers believe, and properly so, that the Scriptural day begins with sundown in the evening. Hence they begin their rest at sundown Friday evening, and continue it until sundown Saturday evening, in the belief that they are resting at the same time as God.

Hasn't it ever occurred to them that the hour of sundown varies throughout the earth? It is two hours later in Perth, W. Australia, than it is in Melbourne; and there is of course a greater difference between Melbourne and England. There is also a difference between the extreme north and south, and the equator; at the equator the days and nights are equal, whereas, within the Arctic and Antarctic Circles there is six months of day and six months of night. Think of the difficulties involved in trying to decide the exact time during which God is resting! Take America, for example; when it is 12 o'clock noon here in Australia it is 9 p.m., the previous night there. This, of necessity, raises the question, which is the true seventh day in the various sections of the globe? We mention these time variations to show how flimsy

is the viewpoint of those who insist that only individuals who rest at a certain period in the week, between sunset and sunset, will be saved. How uncertain a thread indeed, on which one's salvation hangs when viewed from this standpoint! How insecure and unsatisfactory a basis upon which to build the superstructure of character likeness to Jesus and a hope of eternal salvation!

OLD COVENANT PASSED AWAY TO JEWISH BELIEVERS

Much is written in the Book of Hebrews to show that the old Law Covenant passed away to believers with the coming and crucifixion of Christ. And right here it may be well to stress the difference between individual laws of God, and the covenants based upon those laws. It was the Law covenant that came to an end, (to every one that believeth) but the moral laws contained in that covenant are still embodied in God's standard of righteousness for all His people.

Jesus magnified the moral laws of the old covenant. Anger with a brother without a cause, is the equivalent of murder, the Master said; and to look upon a woman to lust after her, is adultery. (Matt.5:21,22,27,28.) Paul said that covetousness is idolatry. (Col. 3:5.) And certainly, to rest from our own works by trusting in the finished work of Christ to give us life, is a beautiful magnifying of the sabbath ordinance of the old covenant—a truly blessed way of entering into God's rest.

We have examined the testimony of the Apostle Paul contained in his sermons and in his epistles, and find that he says not a single word which could, in even the remotest way, be construed to mean that he thought sabbath keeping as essential to salvation for Christians. On the contrary, while, according to his own words, he had not failed to de-

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clare all the counsel of God, he not only does not impose the rite of sabbath keeping upon Christians, but wherever in his writings he refers to the Law given to Israel—especially its ordinances of holy days and the sabbath—he stresses the fact that Christ made an end of it all to those who believe in Him, and who are we to say that Paul was wrong in his understanding?

PETER, JAMES, JOHN AND JUDE

Coming to the last seven epistles of the New Testament, written by Peter, James, John and Jude, we find that they, too, completely ignored the subject of the sabbath. James explains that to break one of the moral laws of God makes one just as guilty before Him as though all were broken, but says nothing about the Sabbath ordinance. He foretold that the rich would heap together treasures for the last days, but gives no hint that in these last days the test of true discipleship would be the keeping of the seventh-day sabbath.

The Apostle Peter, in both of his epistles, reiterates many of the important considerations of the Christian life—our privilege of suffering with Christ; of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God; of adding to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness, love. In his second epistle, he discusses the second coming of Christ, and warns of false teachers arising in the church, and that in the last days there would be scoffers; but writes not a word about the sabbath as though one of the errors of these false teachers would be their failure to enjoin sabbath keeping upon the church.

The Apostle John likewise fails to mention

the sabbath in any of his three epistles. In 1 John 4:2,3, he sets forth the test of Christian fellowship, but says nothing about the sabbath. We quote:- "Every spirit (teaching) that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of anti-Christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

John continues this argument in his second epistle, saying: "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-Christ."—2 John 5-7.

These inspired statements by John are of particular value because they reiterate what constitutes the real commandment of Jesus which is to be considered the test of discipleship. It is the Master's own commandment of love, and in obeying it, to understand and confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Anything opposed to this is a spirit of anti-Christ. What an excellent place—yes, an absolutely essential place—to stress the necessity of seventh-day sabbath keeping as also essential to salvation, if it were one of Jesus' commandments! But the apostle is silent on the subject, from which we can draw no other logical conclusion than that it is not a requirement of Christianity.

Jude's epistle is the very last in the New

Testament, and while it contains a scathing denunciation of false teachers and false doctrines, it says not one word about the seventh-day sabbath. This consistent, yes, universal omission of all mention of seventh-day sabbath keeping throughout the entire New Testament should be good and sufficient reason why any child of God today may consider himself free from the observance of such an ordinance. At least, no one lacking authority from Christ and the apostles, should impose it upon others as a condition prerequisite to salvation.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

We come now to the last book of the Bible—the Book of Revelation. The contents of this book were revealed to John by Jesus Himself. Some refer to it as Jesus' own epistle. Surely here is where we should find something about the seventh-day sabbath if it is one of the commandments of Jesus, the keeping of which is essential to salvation. We are particularly concerned with what the Book of Revelation may say about the seventh-day sabbath, because those who hold that to keep it is essential to salvation teach that keeping the first day of the week as a sabbath of rest is the "mark" of the beast, and the "mark" of the image of the beast referred to in Revelation.

But, strange as it may seem, the word sabbath is not used in the Book of Revelation at all, nor is seventh-day sabbath keeping even remotely referred to. To claim that first-day sabbath keeping is a mark of the beast is to claim that for which there is not the slightest Scriptural authority. It is solely a vain imagination used to frighten the unsuspecting into a form of godliness wholly unauthorized by Jesus and the Apostles.

It is also claimed by seventh-day sabbath keepers that the keeping of the seventh day is the seal of God referred to in Revelation 7:2-4. This claim is also wholly a matter of speculative imagination. There is no Scriptural authority for it. In Ephesians 1:13, the Apostle Paul speaks of Christians being sealed with "the holy spirit of promise." The "sealed" of God, then, are those who are begotten and who are being led by His holy spirit.

Some of the symbols of Revelation are explained by Jesus in the vision given to John, but nothing is said as to what constitutes the "mark" of the beast. It is generally agreed that the "beast" whose "mark" is imposed upon its devotees, is symbolic of the anti-Christian, church-state system of Rome. To be marked by that system would seem clearly to represent abject slavery to its dogmas and practices.

The Apostle Paul spoke of the "marks" of the Lord Jesus. (2 Cor.1:5; 11:23-25.) In Galatians 6:17 he writes, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." This language is based upon the custom of slave owners in the apostle's day of branding their slaves with a particular mark to designate their ownership. Paul had become a bondsman of Jesus Christ, and in this text he is reminding the Galatians of this, and of the fact that now, being "marked" for the service of Christ, none should try to induce him to serve other masters. These were the "marks" or indications of his relationship to Him—the sufferings of Christ.

The "mark" of the beast is evidently referred to by Jesus in Revelation as in contrast to those who bore His marks. To bear the mark of the beast would therefore denote a state of bondage to that great anti-Christ

system of iniquity. To view the matter thus is reasonable, and it is a view that has Scriptural foundation. But to arbitrarily interpret the mark of the beast as keeping the first day of the week as a sabbath of rest is a presumption, and none should be influenced by it.

It is claimed by the Seventh Day Adventists that at some time a civil-ecclesiastical combine will force the United States Government to pass laws forcing the observance of the first day of the week as sabbath, and that then those who yield to this law will thereby be receiving the mark of the "image of the beast," and will perish in the "lake of fire." But how much more reasonable is the Scriptural explanation of what constitutes this mark of the "beast," and its "image;" namely, that it signifies servitude. Paul wrote, "His servants ye are to whom ye obey." (Rom.6:16.) Those who obediently serve the "beast" and its "image" have their "mark."

GOD'S LAW—MOSES' LAW

One claim of the seventh-day sabbath keepers is that the Law is divided into two parts. These they refer to as the ceremonial Law and the moral Law. Their further claim is that Moses wrote the ceremonial Law, whereas God wrote the moral Law. There is, of course, a difference between moral requirements and the observance of ceremonies, but the Scriptures do not warrant the view that God is the Author of one and Moses of the other.

Anyone wishing to satisfy himself on this point can take a concordance and look up the various expressions such as, "the Law of the Lord," "the Law of God," and "the Law of Moses." He will find that they are used interchangeably, thus proving that the laws of Moses are as much the laws of the Lord as those which are declared to be written by the

finger of God upon tables of stone. It will also be found that the ceremonial features of the Law are said to be the Law of the Lord—not merely of Moses. To claim that laws accredited to Moses are not laws of the Lord is a form of higher criticism—a clever way to renounce the inspiration of this faithful servant and prophet of God.

That the ceremonial features of the Law were from the Lord, as well as its moral requirements, is shown in Luke 2:22-24. Here the ceremonial of purification following child-birth is referred to three times. Once it is called the Law of Moses, and twice the Law of the Lord.

In Mark 7:9-13, Moses and God, are referred to interchangeably as the authors of both the moral and the ceremonial laws. Jesus accredits one of the Ten Commandments—"Honor thy father and thy mother"—to Moses. He adds to this commandment a ceremonial requirement, which He also accredits to Moses—"Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death." Finally, in referring to the manner in which Jewish traditions made void these commandments, Jesus refers to them as "the Word of God."

The false claim that the Ten Commandments were from God and the remainder of the Law from Moses is further refuted by God Himself in His commission to Joshua. We quote: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to ALL THE LAW, which Moses My servant commanded thee This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein."—Joshua 1:7,8.

Yes, the "book of the Law" contained "all"

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the Law. There was no division of that Law. Surely God would not ignore the Ten Commandments when giving Joshua this commission to be the new leader of Israel; yet He did ignore them, unless, as God Himself said, "all" the Law was in the "book," the contents of which He had dictated to Moses.

When God spoke to Israel out of the cloud, the people heard the Ten Commandments directly from Him. Then they petitioned Moses to change the arrangement. They were terrified at the voice of the Lord, so the Lord communicated the remainder of the Law to Moses, who wrote it down, and then gave it to the people. The Ten Commandments were also written on stone, probably as a memorial that this much of the Law had been heard directly by the people, rather than that, as some claim, they were more important than the remainder of the Law.

The statement in Deuteronomy 5:22, "and He added no more," does not mean that what God continued to say to Moses was not just as much His Law as the Ten Commandments. The expression simply means that because the people requested that God speak no more to them in this direct manner, He refrained from doing so. He added no more to them directly, but dictated the remainder of the Law to Moses, their mediator.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENTS

A lawyer who sought to trap Jesus, inquired: "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Did Jesus say that it was the sabbath, and that those who do not keep the sabbath will have the "mark of the beast" and die eternally? No, He did not! In answer to this very pointed question, Jesus cited laws which were not even listed among the Ten Commandments. He said: "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets."—Matt.22:37-40.

This should leave no doubt in the mind of any as to what Jesus understood to be the Law of God, for here He attaches more importance to what some refer to as merely the Law of Moses than He does to that which was written directly by the finger of God. In fact, He shows that the entire Law hangs upon that which had been written by Moses. Actually, of course, Moses did not make any laws himself, nor does he claim to have made any. In referring to the commandments, of which the sabbath was one, and to ordinances pertaining to the tabernacle, etc., Moses said, "These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye should do them."—Exod.35:1; 20:22; 21:1.

THE LAW PERPETUAL

It is claimed that the sabbath commandment was a "perpetual" one, which is interpreted to mean that it always was, still is, and forever shall be binding upon mankind. But this is an unscriptural viewpoint. The sabbath commandment was a part of the Law Covenant, and the Scriptures distinctly say, "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us (the Hebrews), even us, who are all here alive this day." (Deut.5:2,3.) It had not existed before this!

The Hebrew word translated "perpetual" does not always carry the thoughts of that which is without end. It sometimes means lasting to a completion, or without interruption until a designed purpose is accomplished. Paul tells us that the Law was added to God's original covenant with Abraham, "till" the promised seed should come. (Gal.3:19.) This is God's own time limit upon the Law covenant.

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Exodus 35:1,2 reads: "...These are the words which the Lord hath commanded, that ye shall do them. 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." Note from this passage that the penalty which God commanded should be imposed upon all Israelites who did not keep the sabbath was death. This phase of the Law was just as binding upon them as the sabbath commandment itself.

The penalty of death was indeed executed by Israelites who were conscientious in living up to all the requirements of the Law. But how about seventh-day sabbath keepers of the present time? If they insist that the sabbath law is still binding, are they equally insisting that all their numbers who are not faithfully living up to this requirement should be put to death, and are they executing that penalty as God enjoined the Israelites to do?

It will probably be said that this part of the Law applies to future life— that all those who do not now keep the seventh-day sabbath will not have life beyond the grave; but this is not what the text says, and it was not so understood by Moses and the Israelites. To so interpret it is simply a wresting of the Scriptures.

NO HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

In order to give color to their theory that first-day sabbath keeping is the "mark of the beast," seventh-day sabbath keepers claim that some pope or civil ruler, or possibly church council, made an arbitrary change from the seventh to the first day. They make this the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy which says of the anti-Christ, that he shall "think to change times and laws." (Dan. 7:25.) But this is wishful thinking, for history does

not actually record any such arbitrary change.

Some claim that Pope Gregory made the change; others that it was made by Constantine; still others that some unknown pope was guilty of this deceptive change. But this uncertainty of just who did it, proves the fallacy of the claim. The Roman Church indeed makes such a claim, but we cannot take this as authority for such an important matter. It might be, and doubtless is, as false as is their claim that Peter was the first pope.

All that has been said, foregoing, concerning seventh-day sabbath keeping is as true concerning the first-day sabbath, as it is concerning the seventh-day sabbath. We have not been trying to prove that resting on the first day of the week has been enjoined upon Christians any more than the seventh day has been. As we have already noted, Paul considered those who esteemed every day alike just as faithful to the Lord as those who did not.

There is, however, much to be said in favor of the appropriateness of Christian worship and service on the first day of the week. Our Lord was raised from the dead on the first day of the week, appeared to His disciples on that day, and also on the succeeding first day. The church at Corinth assembled for worship on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16: 2), likewise the disciples at Troas. (Acts 20:7.) The Day of Pentecost, which some have styled the birthday of the church, was on the first day of the week.

Evidently it was the fact that the Lord was raised from the dead on the first day of the week that caused the early disciples to want to meet together on this day. Knowing that the Law Covenant was dead to those accepting Christ, they would feel no obligation toward the seventh day. The first day would be a

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symbol to them of their hope of life in Christ, the resurrected One. As believers increased, their common practice of worship on this day was doubtless a contributing cause of governments setting this day apart as one of rest for the people.

With fully consecrated Christians, every day is a holy day. To them every day is to be devoted to the service and glory of God. Even their secular duties—the necessities of earning a livelihood—are to be performed as unto the Lord. (1 Cor.10:31; Col.3:17,23.) At the same time, they welcome the opportunity of a day of cessation from these toils in order that their thoughts and strength may be given over more directly to God and to His service.

Because the first day of the week is in most places looked upon as a day of rest and worship, Christians should be glad to observe it. If living in a community made up mostly of those who rest on the seventh day, the spirit of Christ would lead a true follower of His to refrain from secular work on that day, and devote himself to the worship of God—not because he is commanded to do so, but because he delights to spend as much time as possible, no matter which day of the week it may be, in meditating upon holy things and in praising his God.

But, and let it be repeated again, not once does either Jesus or the apostles even so much as hint that Christians who do not rest on the seventh day of the week will not receive eternal life, or are not pleasing to God. This theory, therefore, must be considered as merely the vain philosophy of human wisdom. (Reprinted from "The Everlasting Gospel")

Further literature obtainable from:- Berean Bible Institute, 19 Ermington Pl., Kew, E.4,
Melbourne, Australia.