

be walked on on the Sabbath, for the bruising of the grass was considered harvest work. A man might fill a trough for animals to drink, but he could not carry water to them. The eating of an egg layed on the first day of the week could not be eaten, because presumably it was prepared in the order of nature on the seventh day. Shoes with nails were not to be worn on that day, as that was the carrying of a burden. According to one school of teaching, it was not only not lawful to heal on the Sabbath, but it was wrong to even minister to the sick. It was also laid down in the Mishna that when the sun begins to set a tailor must not walk out with his needle, let sunset should overtake him carrying it. After the Sabbath lamp is lighted one must not pick vermin from his clothes, nor read by its light, for that would be considered work. These Sabbatic laws, in all their burdensome minuteness and frivolousness, were an essential part of Judaism. To keep the Sabbath laws required that one be acquainted with all the laws relating to it, which were many and very detailed.

The Sabbath was meant by God to be a delight and not a day of austerity. The Scribes and Pharisees extracted the literal interpretation to the perversion and subversion of the true spirit and intent of the law. Missing to a great extent its inner spirit, they legislated for its outward observance. Led on by a series of false interpretations, which made no allowance for change of times and circumstances, they held to the letter of the law. They erected a barrier around the law, bristling with a hundred points on which one could be impaled. This made the law the first and greatest commandment, the keeping of it superior in sanctity to all the others, and declared that he who kept the Sabbath holy—holy in their sense of the word—would merit salvation even if he broke every other command in the Decalogue. Thus they made the word of God null and void through their traditions, and they taught the commandments of men rather than the doctrine of God.

It is important to bear these things in mind in studying the acts of our Lord on the Sabbath day. Much of the force of His teaching and of His example is lost if we are ignorant of the peculiar aspect of the Sabbath question in His day.

Jesus worked miracles of healing on seven different Sabbaths and justified these actions to the critical Pharisees by saying, “My Father is working still, and I am working. This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with

God.” (John 5:17-18). Jesus criticized them for exalting the letter of the law over the spirit of the law, for “the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor 3:6).

Coming as Jesus did, “not to abolish but to fulfill [the law]” (Matt 5:17), it was necessary that he should first recover the law from the manipulations of the Scribes and Pharisees—that He should let it be seen as it originally was and what it was meant for, and how it was to be kept. To this end he removed the additions, which age after age had been added to the divine statute until at last, what men had enacted, covered up what God had ordained.

Like everything else He touched, Jesus put this law into its true position and light. He rescued it from the hands of the Scribes and Pharisees and showed it as God would have us esteem it, a day of holy rest, holy service and merciful works. It was God the Son commenting on the law of God the Father. And God the Holy Spirit has inspired holy men of old to write out these teachings and incidents:—and thus we have the true nature and blessedness of the patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Christian Sabbath.

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Pamphlet 257

The Old Testament Sabbath

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Let us turn back to the old Hebrew Sabbath and look at its origin, history and design. As to its origin, it was instituted at the end of the six days work of creation by God, Himself, and was designed to commemorate his rest on the seventh day “from all his work which he had done.” Hence, God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

By blessing the Sabbath day we are to understand that He designed it to be a source of blessing, for that is the only way time can be blessed. By sanctifying the seventh day, it is understood, in accordance with Old Testament language, the hallowing or setting apart from other days, by specific acts and consecrating it for a holy purpose.

The name *Sabbath* given to this day comes from the Hebrew *Shá bath*, which signifies to rest, hence Shábbath, the day of rest. The root of the word is *Shéba*, or seven, a number which signifies fullness, completeness or perfection. Therefore we find septenary divisions of time, consisting of cycles of seven days, or seven months, or seven years, which can be accounted for by referring them back to the seventh-day rest after creation.

These things link the Sabbath with God as its author, with the finished work of creation as its first day observance, and with man being the recipient of the blessings conferred. Thus the Sabbath has a divine, worldly, and human basis, and is a universal obligation in perpetuity. While in the succeeding patriarchal times we find no formal mention of the Sabbath, there are numerous indications of it appearing, showing that the institution was still preserved, though in the lapse of centuries and in the dispersion of the human race its obligations were less heeded and its observance less marked.

Over two thousand years pass before we find formal notice of this day. The children of Israel, under the leadership of Moses escaped from Egypt. After a month’s journey the people began to complain that they had no bread or meat to eat. In turn God provided. “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel; say to them, At twilight you shall

eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.' In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it? For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat' (Exod 16:12-15). The people gathered an "omer" (six pints) for each person, except on the sixth day when a double portion was collected. Moses explained by saying, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay by to be kept till the morning.' So they laid it by till the morning, as Moses bade them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a sabbath, there will be none." (Exod 16:23-26).

This took place one month before the delivery of the Law on Mount Sinai. The Decalogue once again reiterated the necessity of keeping the Sabbath holy. God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger upon the two tablets of stone. Because of the sacredness and the accuracy demanded, God did not trust Moses, His great prophet, nor even Archangel Gabriel to write out or even copy the words from His mouth. He wrote with His own finger, and on tablets not of brass or gold made by man, but on tablets of stone of His own handiwork, that man might have the exact, literal translation of His will, so that there would be no mistake or confusion as to His words or their meaning. These Ten Commandments are the moral law of the world, given at that time to the Jews, but intended for the entire human race, and recognized as such by our Lord and His apostles, and by the Church of God in the world.

The law of the Sabbath stands as the third of these commands. It was carved on the same stone tablets as the other nine; it was written with the same finger which wrote the others; it was deposited under the mercy seat in the Arc of the Covenant, and between the outstretched wings of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies, with the rest, and if the other nine are moral laws, the third is also; if the third is not, the other nine are not. *Ten* is a number of spiritual perfection or

completion, we cannot dislocate one commandment from the others. The commandments are the ten laws of which seem to be the ten fingers of God, whereby He upholds the moral government of the world.

The third commandment was drawn up with a specificity which is not found in the others. It is based, as none other is, on God's special example. It is the only one linked with His special blessing and sanctification. It is the only one given both positively and negatively. No command was more frequently repeated, none more carefully guarded; and it the only command of God which God said was a "sign" between Him and the children of Israel, throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant, and this peculiar language is repeated four times by Moses and Ezekiel.

We must realize that the third commandment is of perpetual obligation, that is still binding with all its original force, that it demands the same obedience that we owe to any other commandment, for they are each an expression of God's will.

The third commandment reads, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed" (Exod 20:8-11). This was the formal proclamation of the Sabbatic law. It is embedded in a divine code not one provision of which has been abrogated or set aside. The day has been changed, but the obligation to set aside a seventh portion of time as hallowed time still holds, and will hold till the end of time.

Under the Jewish economy the law of the Sabbath involved several points. In the 23rd chapter of the book of Leviticus we find the law incorporated into the statutes of the Jewish theocracy, with certain added prescriptions designed to show how it was to be kept holy.

The Sinaitic law and the Levitical statutes outline the elemental and obligatory points. The Sabbath was to be a *day of rest*; it was to be the *seventh* day; it was to be a *holy day*; it was to be a day of *holy convocation*; or the assembling of the people for holy purposes, and it was to be kept *in every family and dwelling*. God distinctly declared, "Therefore the people of Israel shall

keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (Exod 31:16-17). Death was the penalty for breaking the Sabbath (Exod 31:14). It was a sign between God and His people—the sign of the covenant; so that to break the Sabbath was to break the covenant with God.

Aside from these general regulations there were no specific directions as to how the Sabbath was to be kept. The only exception was that the daily sacrifices for this day should be doubled and the loaves of shew-bread on the table in the Holy of Holies were to renewed by twelve fresh cakes.

It was a day of sacred festivity, of social gathering, of religious instruction, of personal freedom, of physical rest for man and animal. As the nation grew in wealth and luxury, evil habits and thoughts were assimilated from the surrounding heathen nations, the law of the Sabbath was gradually neglected and profaned. Work encroached little by little, secularity took the place of devotion, and although God raise up one prophet after another, the profanation of the Sabbath went on until the Babylonian captivity engulfed the people in one overwhelming sorrow and chastisement. They had polluted his Sabbaths and broken His covenant and so, for a time, God gave them over to their enemies. After their return, under Nehemiah, a stricter observance was enforced. The lessons learned in captivity were hard, but wholesome. The captivity brought about a searching of heart and this resulted in resolutions of amendment of life. As they sat by the rivers of Babylon, they longed for their once quiet Sabbaths and holy meetings.

It was after the captivity that the schools of the Rabbis were founded and the sect of the Pharisees established. The laxity of former times was now offset by extreme rigidity. A spirit of scrupulous and intense Judaism was fostered by the Scribes and Pharisees. The law of Moses was overlaid with the incrustations of rabbinic traditions.

This spirit finds its record in the Mishna and the Gemara, and in the Talmud, the records of the great Jewish schools and doctors of Jewish law. The primary injunction, "you shall not do any work", was falsely held at all kind of work whatever. Thirty-nine classes of work were proscribed. It was stated that grass was not to