

Elihu

on the

S A B B A T H

Benjamin Clark

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IN reviewing the subject of “the Sabbath,” I design not to follow any previous writer, but simply, plainly, and briefly, to convince sinners of sin, let their profession be what it may. And this I hope and pray may be done without giving offense to those who love the truth more than error; for God has many servants on earth who would gladly exchange error for truth, and many who do exchange their former traditions for the precious and everlasting truths of God as contained in his word.

Now, the New Testament witnesses to the law and to the prophets; and that book is said to have been written thus: Matthew’s gospel, six years after the resurrection of Christ; Mark’s gospel, ten years after the church commenced; Luke’s gospel, twenty-eight years after; John’s gospel, sixty-three years after; the Acts of the Apostles, thirty years after; the epistle to the Romans, and two to the Corinthians, and Galatians, twenty-four years after; Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews, twenty-nine years; to Timothy, Titus, and the second epistle of Peter, thirty years; the Revelation of John, sixty one years; his three epistles, about sixty-five years after the resurrection, and the church had properly commenced. And it is easy for us to understand how these apostles understood and practised with regard to the Sabbath, and they are the “foundation” next after Christ himself. Therefore, if there was any such institution known and frequently spoken of in the church as “Sabbath,” in those different ages of the church, we can easily know what was then meant by it. Some say, if we keep the seventh day of the week, we shall keep a “Jewish Sabbath!” Well, we have no Saviour to trust in but Jesus Christ, who was, according to the flesh, a Jew no other apostles and prophets but Jewish

—no other than Jewish Scriptures—and, indeed, Jesus said himself that “salvation is of the Jews.” John 4:22. And what did the writers of the New Testament mean by the words “Sabbath” and “Sabbath day”?

What did Matthew mean in the sixth year of the Christian church? He certainly did not mean the first day of the week, but he meant the day before the first day of the week. See Matt. 28:1. He meant what all other Jewish writers ever meant; viz., “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” But neither Matthew nor any of the apostles ever told us a word about the Sabbath being changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. Now, if the Scriptures can not be broken, but everywhere mean one and the same thing; viz., “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord,” then, if ministers contradict this, and say the seventh day is not the Sabbath of the Lord, but the first day of the week is the Sabbath, will they not in this, bear witness clearly and positively against themselves, unless they bring forward the chapter, and verse where God commanded the Sabbath to be changed? What did Mark mean by the word, “Sabbath”? He meant, also, that the Sabbath was the day before the first day of the week. Chap. 16:1, 2. Surely, if the Sabbath had been changed at the resurrection of Christ, Mark would have known it within ten years afterward. What did Luke mean, who wrote twenty-eight years after the resurrection of Christ? He also meant that the Sabbath was the day before the first day of the week! for he says that the women who prepared the ointment rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment. Chapter 23:56. Thus Luke understood the words “Sabbath day,” in the fifty-eighth year of the Christian era, to mean the day immediately preceding the first day of the week. How did John understand this subject in the sixty third year of the Christian church? He not only speaks of the Sabbath day as the others did, but he shows plainly that the first day of the week was considered a business day by the disciples after the resurrection. John 20:1. See also Luke 24:13. But what did the writer of the Acts of the Apostles mean by the words “Sabbath” and “Sabbath day,” thirty years after the Christian church was fully commenced? In writing, he often mentions the Sabbath, and

once mentions the first day of the week as meaning quite another thing in plain distinction from the Sabbath. Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 20:7. The practise of the Jews was then, as it is now, to meet in the synagogue on the seventh day. And again: "the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God." He does not say this was the Jewish Sabbath, but the Sabbath day; this was the seventh day; and the first day of the week was not then known as a Sabbath by this writer; because he says the next Sabbath day most all of the Jews and Gentiles came together again. I say there would not have been any next Sabbath in the week till the next seventh day. Again, Acts 16:13: "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made." He does not say on the Jewish Sabbath, nor on one of the Sabbaths, as though there were two Sabbaths then, but on the Sabbath, *i.e.*, the seventh day, as understood by all Jewish writers of this day. Again, chapter 17:2, Paul, as his manner was, went in among the Jews, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. Thus have I proved that the apostles of Christ understood that one day in the week should be called the Sabbath day; and, further, I have proved that this day was the day before the first day of the week, which is the seventh day; and you can not deny it, nor by the Scriptures disprove it; consequently, if the apostles of our Lord always called the seventh day the Sabbath day, six, ten, twenty-eight, thirty, and sixty-three years after the church was fully commenced, then it must be the Sabbath day now. And every one of the Lord's ministers who calls any other day the Sabbath besides the one so called by the writers of the New Testament, gives it a title which is nowhere found in the Scriptures; for when they say the Sabbath day, they mean something very different from what the New Testament means. It is already proved that the apostles called the seventh day of the week the Sabbath and the Sabbath day for many years after the church was fully commenced.

Now we are to show what sin is; and we are not left to guess at it, or to suppose it; but we have a given rule to know with certainty what constitutes sin. "By the law," then, "is the knowledge of sin." By what law was the

knowledge of sin twenty-four years after the resurrection of Christ? Ans.—The very same law that was given when it was said, “Thou shalt not covet.” The law; then, by which sin is known, is the Ten Commandments, and you can not deny it! This law says, “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Ex. 20:10, 11. Now, until this law is altered or abrogated (and Christ says he “came not to destroy the law”) by the same power that enacted it, a willful transgression of it is a willful sin, let your profession be what it may; for sin is the transgression of the law. He that offends in one point, or in one of these commandments, is guilty of all, *i.e.*, is a transgressor of the law, a sinner in the sight of God. Now, a regenerated soul, a true-hearted Christian, says with Paul: “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” And any person who is not willing to keep the commandments of God, when plainly understood, has still a carnal mind, which “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Will you say this is judging too hard or, “This is an hard saying, who can bear it?” I wish to judge no man; but the word that the Lord hath spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day. John 12:48. “As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel” Rom. 2:12-16. Then those who shall hold the truth in unrighteousness, those who pretend to keep the law differently from what God appointed it, those who, in fact, lay aside the commandments of God (the seventh day or any other command), and teach for doctrines the commandments of men (the first day instead of the seventh), such, the Word says, are vain worshipers. Mark 7:7. But you say, It makes no difference which day is kept or called the Sabbath day, provided we keep one-seventh part of the time! This is not correct, because God never said so. God

is not to be mocked in this way! He has been very good and kind to make the Sabbath for man, to appoint the day, and the particular time of the day when the Sabbath is to commence, and when it is to end; it is the seventh day in order from the creation—the seventh day in the creation; and He said, “From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbaths;” as the evening and the morning were reckoned for the day. God did not leave this subject undecided, so that his people would appoint different days, and then for every one to call his own the Sabbath day. But God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, and proved that particular day to be designated by him, in the face and eyes of about six hundred thousand witnesses, by a miracle directly from heaven, in withholding the manna on that day, and in giving the food for that day on the day before; and you can not deny it, nor disprove it. Again, you say, How shall we know which is the seventh day? I answer, Do you wish to know? Then ask the Jews; for God has committed the lively oracles to them, and then scattered them among the nations. Do you know when the first day of the week comes? Well, the Sabbath is always the day before the first day of the week. Matt. 28:1. But you may say, Do not the majority of honest-hearted Christians keep the first day of the week? And have they not for centuries done common labor on the seventh day, and observed the first in obedience to the fourth command, and still been honest in their motives, and living Christians? I answer, What is that to us, so long as the true light of the Sabbath did not come to their minds? . . .

Now, we certainly know what sin is, not by what popular writers say—not by the popular traditions of our fathers—not altogether by our feelings—but by the law of God is this knowledge; for sin is the transgression of the law; and all who have the law of God have an infallible and everlasting rule to know what, sin is. Art thou a willful transgressor of the law of God? Then by the law is the knowledge that thou art a willful sinner before God. But if thou art an ignorant transgressor of the law of God, then by the law is the knowledge that thou art an ignorant sinner before God. To say nothing of presumptuous sin; I say, If thou hast ignorantly

sinned, then repent and reform, and God will heal you. Lev. 4:2, 13.

By the law of God, then, is the clear knowledge of sin. I speak to you, Protestants, who keep the Sunday, a day formerly dedicated to the worship of the sun by the pagans, and afterward brought into the church by Constantine and Roman Catholics, and called the Christian Sabbath, a name never known for the first day of the week by any of the writers of the New Testament; I speak to you, Protestants, and ask you if you have any given rule to know what sin is. Have you any certain rule to know whether Roman Catholics sin or not, in bowing down to images? They say they do not sin! You say you know they do sin! But how do you know it is sin to bow down to images, when they say it is not sin? Ans.—By the law, you say, you know this is sin, and you know it by no other rule; for you “had not known sin but by the law.” Well, by the same rule I know what sin is. You say it is not sin to work and do common labor on the seventh day. But we know, not by your assertion, but by the law, whether you sin or not. You say you know by the law that it is sin to bow down to images. I say (by your own rule), I know by the law that it is sin to do common labor on the seventh day; and you can not deny it! And, if you know it is the duty of Roman Catholics to repent of their sins for transgressing the second command, then I know it is also your duty to repent of your sins for transgressing the fourth command. He who said, “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not bow down to images, neither serve them,” etc., also said, “The seventh day is the Sabbath.” I would that you could see the weakness of your argument; viz., that one-seventh part of time was meant in the law, without regard to any particular day. In this you make the commandments of God of no effect through your tradition. Yea, you make void the part of the command which says, “The *seventh day* is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” We read, not that the Lord blessed the seventh part of time, or the Sabbath institution, as you say, but the seventh day in particular. Why do you wish to take out and make void this part of the fourth command, when Christ hath said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot

or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law"? It was just as necessary that the particular day should be designated as it was that there should be a Sabbath made for man. It would not have been according to divine wisdom to say, Thou shalt keep one-seventh part of time, or one day in seven, because this would have left mankind in as much confusion as your theory could make them! One might have kept one day, another the next, till seven Sabbaths were kept in one family. Thus much for your seventh part of time.

Suppose a parent should command his child to do a certain piece of labor on a certain day, and that the child should, without any just cause, neglect to perform the labor on the day specified, and should perform it on the next day. Would this show any respect for the authority of the parent? or would the parent approbate such conduct in his child? You must say, No. Or, if a governor should command all the military to do duty two days in the year, and leave each one to select his own days, there would be as much wisdom in this as in your seventh part of time for the Sabbath of the Lord. God is not the author of confusion, but of order; while your theory of one-seventh part of time, or one whole day in seven, instead of the seventh day, impeaches the divine wisdom, and makes God the author of confusion. Thus your theory, not the law of God, leads to anarchy and confusion, and the observance of no Sabbath, and you can not deny it. What reasonable objection have you to the law of God? What fault can you find with it just as it stands? Have you wisdom enough to change it for the better? "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" Ps. 19:7. Yea, it is so perfect that it has already converted the souls of many, even from the doctrines and commandments of men, to keep the Sabbath of the Lord, and I trust in God it will convert many more. Because the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes—more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Verses 8, 10. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. . . . For I [Paul] delight in the law of God after the inward man."

Reader, dost thou delight in the law of God after the inward man? If not, thy soul should be converted, by praying for the law of God to be put into thy heart, and written in thy mind: But, if the law of God is already thy delight, then why not be reconciled to it? Why not be subject to it just as it stands? Why wish to make void one jot or tittle of it? I do not present the law for justification, but as a perfect rule of right in this life; first, between man and his Creator; secondly, between man and his fellow man. “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

The Westminster divines found contradicting the writer of the Acts of the Apostles. These divines say, “From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath, and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.”

1. Luke (the writer of the Acts of the Apostles) says (Acts 13:14), Paul and his company went into a synagogue of the Jews on the Sabbath day, which was, according to our account, A.D. 45, and twelve years after the resurrection of Christ. Luke says this was on the Sabbath day then, at that time. But the divines say this was not on the Sabbath day at that time, but on Saturday, and that the seventh day was not then the Sabbath, neither had been for twelve years. Thus they contradict Luke, plainly and pointedly.

2. Luke says (Acts 13:42, 44), that “when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words of the Gospel might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” “And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.” This, Luke says, was on the Sabbath day at that time, twelve years after the resurrection. But the divines say that it was not on the Sabbath at that time; for Sunday had been the Sabbath for twelve years.

3. Luke says (Acts 16:13), “And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the riverside, where prayer was wont to be

made;" A.D. 53, twenty years after the resurrection, and ten years before the Acts of the Apostles was written. This, Luke says, was actually on the Sabbath day at that time; but the divines contradict him, saying this was not the Sabbath at that time, but on Saturday; for the seventh day was not then the Sabbath, neither had been for twenty years—never since the resurrection of Christ! Thus they contradict Luke again; for all admit that Luke always called the seventh day, the day the Jews met in their synagogue, the Sabbath, in the Acts of the Apostles.

4. Luke says (Acts 17:2-4), Paul, at Thessalonica, "as his manner was," went into a synagogue of the Jews, and so preached Christ and the resurrection three Sabbath days that some Jews and a great multitude of the Gentiles believed. This was twenty years after the resurrection of Christ. This, Luke says, was on three Sabbath days then, at the same time. But the divines deny this also, because they say that the Sabbath had been changed from the seventh day to the first day of the week twenty years before. Thus they give Luke the lie.

5. Luke says (Acts 18:3, 4), Paul, at Corinth, labored with his hands, as tent-maker (on the other days, as we should understand), but "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." This was A.D. 54, twenty-one years after the resurrection of Christ, and nine years before the Acts of the Apostles was written. This, Luke said, or wrote, A.D. 63, the thirtieth year after the resurrection, and the thirtieth year of the Christian church—that this preaching of Paul was on every Sabbath; that is, on every seventh day, the same day that the Jews always met in their synagogue for worship. This is plain, pointed, and positive proof that the seventh day was the Sabbath, at least thirty years after the resurrection of Christ; for Luke testified again and again that those meetings of the Jews and Gentiles were held on the Sabbath, and if Luke was a Christian, then the seventh day was the Christian Sabbath thirty years after the resurrection, the Westminster divines to the contrary notwithstanding. And if the seventh day was the Sabbath thirty years after the resurrection of Christ, as Luke says it was, then it is the Sabbath now. For you will admit

that no man, or body of men, have had any lawful right to alter or change this command of God since A.D. 63. But we find not one word in favor of the idea, not even the least hint or allusion in all the New Testament, that the first day of the week was ever so much as thought of as a Christian Sabbath by any of the apostles while they lived. And you must give it up; yea, and you will give it up, if you search the Scriptures carefully and prayerfully on this subject, and if you have a spirit of discernment, and are willing to forsake error for truth, and if you are an honest Christian in the sight of God.

Now, the Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, then why need I stop to examine all the various doctrines of popes, councils, and fathers, when in searching I should find pope against pope, council against council, and fathers against fathers? This would be like two companies fighting at great distance, with small arms. But if we wish to come to close action, let us take the armor of truth, which will most assuredly prevail; and the closer the action, the sooner the victory will be won on the side of truth. Now, my dear reader, if you will take the Scriptures and search them as above requested, then you will find the following valuable treasures of knowledge among the many therein contained:

1. You will find Christ himself saying, "The Sabbath was made for man," and that it was made when the first seven days were made, before man had sinned. The Sabbath was thus made not for the Jews in particular, but as a gift of God to man; *i.e.*, mankind universally, of all nations and of all ages of the world.

2. You will find that before the law given at Mount Sinai, this was a law and a commandment (Exodus 16): that it was also written by the finger of God, with the "lively oracles," which God committed to the Jews to give to us; that this law, by which is the clear knowledge of sin, is an infallible and everlasting rule by which to know what is sin, and what is not sin; that sin is the transgression of the law; and that to act against it, or to do things contrary to it, is sin; but "where no law is, there is no transgression;" that this law

Christ came not to destroy, abrogate, or make void; that the law is holy, and just, and good; and that Christians delight in it. And as Paul had not “known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet,” so we had not known which day of the week was the Sabbath, except the law had said, “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” Now, we know by the law that this is the Sabbath, without the help of commentators.

3. You can find that the resurrection of our Saviour has nothing to do with changing the Sabbath, any more than his birth, his death, or his ascension. Whether he was risen near the end of the Sabbath, or some time before the common time of commencing the first-day sabbath, so called, has nothing to do with altering one jot or one tittle of the law of God.

4. You can find that the common reasonings of men, that Christ frequently met with his disciples on the first day of the week, after his resurrection more than on other days, are false and without foundation; that he went with two of them to Emmaus, about seven and a half miles, and returned to Jerusalem, which would plainly show that he did not regard that day as a Sabbath; that he met with his disciples in the evening, which must have been after the commencement of the second day of the week (see Gen. 1:8), when they were met, but not to celebrate the resurrection as false reasoners pretend: that he met with them again “after eight days,” *i. e.*, near the middle of the next week; and again they were together fishing, so that the fishing-day would prove a Sabbath, as much as either of the first two visits.

5. You can find that Luke had not forgotten the distinction between the “first day of the week” and “the Sabbath day” (Acts 20:7) in his recording the meeting of the disciples to break bread on that day, and that this is the only time the first day of the week is mentioned in all the Acts of the Apostles and it is the only notice of Paul’s preaching on that particular day, or rather, evening, and that on a particular occasion; *viz.*, in order to be “ready to depart on the morrow;” that this one instance of the first day’s being mentioned proves that it was not the Sabbath, and that the many

meetings of the Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers, where Paul preached “every Sabbath,” certainly, did not occur on the first day of the week.

6. You may find that Paul, in giving orders to some of the churches to lay by themselves in store something according as God had prospered them, on the first day of the week for the poor saints at Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:2), does not prove that to be the Sabbath day, but that it was not the Sabbath day, nor suitable to a Sabbath day’s work; but rather as an offering to the Lord of “the first ripe fruits of their increase;” to be the first business attended to in the week, to reckon up their earnings and incomes, and devote a part of the same, and lay it by itself, so that it would be ready when Paul came. This was a good calculation for the first business of the week.

7. You can find there is no law of God against doing common labor on the first day of the week, so it is no sin, nor transgression of any law other than the laws and commandments of men.

8. You can find that the Saviour said to his disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” Again, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” Again, “Jesus answered and said unto him [Jude], if a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

Now, my dear reader, if you neglect or refuse to obey this fourth command of the Decalogue, you are left without excuse, and you can plead nothing in extenuation of your neglect. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.”

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