

The Sabbath in the New Testament.

BY ELDER JAMES WHITE.

WE affirm that the only weekly Sabbath of the Old and New Testaments is the seventh day. The terms, Jewish Sabbath, and Christian Sabbath, are not Bible terms. The term used by the Author of the moral code is, "The Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Ex. 20:10. The Jews had annual sabbaths, which are termed "your sabbath," and "her sabbaths;" but the weekly Sabbath of the Bible is called by way of eminence, The Sabbath, in both the Old and the New Testament.

The Bible does not recognize two weekly Sabbaths, one in the Old Testament, to be observed on the seventh day of the week, and one in the New Testament, to be observed on the first day of the next week. There is but one weekly Sabbath taught in all the Bible. The Sabbath of the Old Testament is the Sabbath of the New Testament. On the seventh day of the first week of time God rested from the work of creation. This he did not do on any other day of that week. He sanctified the very day of his rest. That is, he set it apart to a holy use. This he did not do with regard to any other day of the week. He put his blessing upon the seventh day, the day of his rest. This he has not done to any other day of the week. God has commanded the sacred observance of the day of his rest. He has not commanded the sacred observance of the first, or of any other of the six secular days of the week.

As indicated by the heading of this tract, we invite attention to the Sabbath, as taught in the New Testament. While it is freely admitted that the seventh-day Sabbath is taught in the Old Testament, the general impression is abroad in the Christian world that the observance of another day is taught in the New Testament. It is in hope of removing this false impression from the minds of candid readers that we come directly to the New Testament, and risk the discussion of this subject at this time on the testimony of inspired Christian writers.

And, first, we inquire, When was the New Testament written? Answer: In the Christian age. Matthew, it is said, wrote his gospel six years after the resurrection of Christ. The other books of the New Testament were written later, and at different dates during a period of sixty-five years, after the establishment of the Christian church.. Again we inquire, Who wrote the New Testament? Answer: Christian men, who had been converted from Judaism. And for whose benefit was the New Testament written? Answer: The men of the Christian age. How was the New Testament written? Answer: By inspiration of God. Then, if the New Testament was written in the Christian, and not in the Jewish, age; by Christian, and not by Jewish, men; for the benefit of the men of the Christian, and not the men of the Jewish, age; and by inspiration of God,—it follows that the terms used in the New Testament are the inspired terms for the Christian church. Now there are two days named in the New Testament, standing side by side, each claimed by different bodies of Christians as the Sabbath of the Christian church. These are the last and the first days of the week. The Seventh-day Baptists, and the Seventh-day Adventists observe the seventh day of the week as the Lord's Sabbath, while the Christian world generally hold that the first day

of the week is the Sabbath for Christians. But how does this matter of these two days stand in the New Testament?

The first day of the week is mentioned in the New Testament only eight times, and is not in a single instance spoken of as a Sabbath, a day of rest, or a sacred day. It is simply called the first day of the week. On the other hand, inspiration gives the seventh day of the week in the New Testament the sacred title of the Sabbath fifty-nine times. We will here give the eight texts which mention the first day of the week, and see if they prove what they are said to prove.

FIRST TEXT.—Matt. 28:1: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher." Here two days are mentioned. One is called the Sabbath, and the other, the day following it, is called the first day of the week. Which of the two days is the Sabbath for Christians? Is it the one that is simply called the first day of the week, and is never called the Sabbath, or spoken of as a day of rest, in the New Testament? Or, is it the day which inspired Christian writers, in the Christian age, writing for the benefit of the men of the Christian age, call the Sabbath?

SECOND TEXT.—Mark 16:2: "And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun." We give this passage, and the following three, because we are giving every text in the New Testament that mentions the first day of the week. They only show that the first day of the week is called simply the first day of the week.

THIRD TEXT.—Verse 9: "Now when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the week, he appeared

first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."

FOURTH TEXT.—Luke 24:1: "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them."

FIFTH TEXT.—John 20:1: "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher."

SIXTH TEXT.—Verse 19: "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." From this text, it is asserted that the disciples met on the day of our Lord's resurrection to commemorate that event, and that Jesus sanctioned this meeting by uniting with them. To this assertion we reply:—

The disciples at that time did not believe that their Lord had been raised from the dead. Mark 16:9-14, proves this. It is there stated that he first appeared to Mary, who "went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not." Verses 10, 11. They did not believe Mary.

"After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue; neither believed they them." Verses 12, 13. They would not believe the two disciples to whom Jesus had that day made himself known at Emmaus. Read Luke 24:13-36.

"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief

and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen." Verse 14. Jesus reproved the disciples for their unbelief in regard to his resurrection. And it is not remarkable that he should find his disciples together that evening, inasmuch as they had one common abode. Acts 1:13: "And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James." See also Mark 3:19. And our Lord appeared to them "as they sat at meat."

The simple facts in the case, then, are that Jesus appeared to his disciples at their home, as they were enjoying a common meal, and that they did not, two excepted, believe that he had risen from the dead. But ministers gravely assert that they were assembled for religious worship, commemorating the resurrection of their Lord! Whether assertions of this kind be made in ignorance of the facts in the case, or to deceive the people, it is time that those who make them be rebuked, and the people read the facts in the case for themselves out of the New Testament.

It is also asserted that Christ often appeared to his disciples on the first day of the week. But only one text (John 20:26) is cited to prove this assertion, and this proves nothing to the point. "And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." The text says, the disciples *were within*, which does not mean that they had *gone out* to meeting. They were at home. Again, after eight days does not mean seven, but carries us past the next Sunday to Monday night, at least. But here we are met with the assertion that the phrase, *after eight days* is indefinite, therefore does

not prove that Christ appeared to his disciples on Monday evening. But if it be indefinite, who knows that it means just one week? In the name of common sense we protest against making the phrase indefinite in order to remove the circumstance from Monday, and then making it definite to establish it on Sunday. The phrase is either definite, or it is not; if it is not definite, then no one can tell the day on which Jesus met with his disciples the second time. If it is definite, then the second time that Jesus appeared to his disciples was as late as Monday night.

SEVENTH TEXT.—Acts 20 : 7 : “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight.”

It is asserted that the disciples, after the ascension of their Lord, assembled on the first day of the week to commemorate his resurrection by the breaking of bread. We reply that the communion does not commemorate the resurrection, but the crucifixion of our Lord. 1 Cor. 11 : 26. And as it was celebrated at Troas on a different day from that on which it was first instituted by our Lord, we conclude that it was not designed to be celebrated on any one particular day of each week. The meeting at Troas seems to have been an occasional meeting to break bread, as Paul was to depart on the morrow.

From the circumstance of there being “many lights in the upper chamber” where the disciples were assembled to break bread, we conclude that it was an evening meeting. Paul preached all night, and at day-break started off on foot to Assos, and there joined his brethren in a ship, and came to Mitylene.

Now comes the inquiry, On what day of the week did that meeting hold all night? Answer: “Upon

the first day of the week." As each day commences at sunset, according to God's division of time (Gen. 1), that meeting at Troas was held on what is called Saturday night, and Paul and his brethren started off on their long journey to Jerusalem in the morning of the first day of the week. Here is apostolic example for labor on the first day of the week.

If it be said that the meeting at Troas was held on Sunday night, and that the disciples started on their journey Monday morning, we reply that in that case the meeting was held on the second day of the week; and those who, with this position, plead apostolic example from Acts 20 : 7, should keep Monday as the Christian Sabbath.

But, leaving the question in regard to what night this meeting was held, there is an important fact which places the subject beyond all controversy. The first part of each of the seven days of the week is night, the last part is the day. The disciples held a meeting at Troas in the first part of the day, and journeyed on the last part of the same day. If, then, this day received the stamp of sacredness by this meeting of the apostles in the first part of it, their journeying in the last part of it removed the stamp of sacredness from it.

EIGHTH TEXT.—1 Cor. 16 : 2: "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." It is inferred from this text that Paul enjoins a public collection; therefore the Corinthian church met for worship each first day of the week; therefore it is the Christian Sabbath. But it is an important fact that the apostle enjoins exactly the reverse of a public collection. He says, "Let every one of you lay by him in store." This is an individual work for each to attend to at home.

Justin Edwards, in his notes on the New Testament,

comments on this text thus: "Lay by him in store; at home. That there be no gatherings; that their gifts might be ready when the apostle should come."

Prof. J. W. Morton, late missionary to Hayti, in his *Vindication of the True Sabbath*, says: "The whole question turns upon the meaning of the expression, 'by him'; and I marvel greatly how you can imagine that it means 'in the collection-box of the congregation.' Greenfield, in his *Lexicon*, translates the Greek term, '*by one's self*, i. e., *at home*.' Two Latin versions, the Vulgate and that of Castellio, render it, '*apud se*,' with one's self, at home. Three French translations, those of Martin, Osterwald, and De Sacy, '*chez soi*,' at his own house, at home. The German of Luther, '*bei sich selbst*,' by himself, at home. The Dutch, '*by hemselfen*,' same as the German. The Italian of Diodati, '*appresso di se*,' in his own presence, at home. The Spanish of Felipe Scio '*en su casa*,' in his own house. The Portuguese of Ferreira, '*para isso*,' with himself. The Swedish, '*när sig sjelf*,' near himself. I know not how much this list of authorities might be swelled, for I have not examined one translation that differs from those quoted above."

We have now noticed the eight texts which mention the first day of the week in the New Testament, and find there no commandment to keep the day, no intimation of a change of the day of the Sabbath, and no grounds for inference that the day possesses any more sacredness than the five days that follow it.

In contrast, we find that the Sabbath is mentioned fifty-nine times in the New Testament, and in every instance reference is made to the last day of the week, on which the Creator rested from his work, the day he set apart as his, the day on which he put his blessing. We here give reference to the texts in the New Testament which call the seventh day of the week the

Sabbath. Matt. 12:1, 2, 5 (twice), 8, 10, 11, 12; 24:20; 28:1; Mark 1:21; 2:23, 24, 27 (twice), 28; 3:2, 4; 6:2; 15:42; 16:1; Luke 4:16, 31; 6:1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9; 13:10, 14 (twice), 15, 16; 14:1, 3, 5; 23:54, 56; John 5:9, 10, 16, 18; 7:22, 23 (twice); 9:14, 16; 19:31 (twice); Acts 1:12; 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4. Total, 59.

We do not propose to notice all these texts at this time, as many of them contain no other proof to the point than that the Sabbath is the inspired name of the seventh day of the week in the Christian dispensation. And we might here add, that if the phrase, "Christian Sabbath," be admissible, the seventh day of the week is the Christian Sabbath. We will notice a few of the above texts.

Matt. 24:20: "And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." It is generally believed that this text has reference to the flight of Christians from the city of Jerusalem at the time of its destruction. Then our Lord recognized the existence of the Sabbath, A. D. 70, as verily as the seasons of the year. The text also shows that our Lord regarded the Sabbath as a definite day in the week. Some teach that the Sabbath day is not a definite day of the week, but only "a seventh part of time," or "one day in seven and no day in particular." If this be a proper definition of the Sabbath, we may use the definition for the word given in the text. This would make our Lord say, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a seventh part of time!" If such a prayer had been answered so that the poor Christians might not leave on one day in seven, we would like to know when they could have made their flight.

Mark 2:27, 28: "And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sab-

bath; therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." The Jews supposed that the Sabbath was Jewish—made for them alone. They had the institution buried up with their traditions, so that in their bigotry they even dared to charge the Lord of the Sabbath and his followers with its desecration. Jesus rebuked them. "The Sabbath," said he, "was made for man"—for the entire race. Many hold the limited view of the Sabbath which the Jews held, and cry, "It's Jewish;" but Christian Sabbath-keepers are happy to know that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment which they observe and teach.

Luke 23:56: "And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." This is spoken of Christ's intimate friends, who had followed their Lord to the sepulcher. It was probably near the close of the sixth day when Jesus died upon the cross. He was taken down and borne to the sepulcher. The Marys returned and prepared the spices. The Sabbath came as the sun went down. They rested. How? "According to the commandment." The Sabbath, and the commandment guarding it, lived after the death of Christ; and Luke, writing as is supposed twenty-eight years after the crucifixion, records the observance of the Sabbath according to the commandment by Christians after the death of Christ, as an important fact for the Christian church.

We now come to the book of Acts. Those who would follow apostolic example will come with us to this book with peculiar interest. But first we would remark that apostolic example, when in harmony with divine precept, is clothed with authority. Without precept, it has no real force. Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention (Acts 15:39), yet no one feels bound to follow their example in that respect. Now

if it could be shown that the disciples often assembled in the day-time of the first day of the week, this would fall far short of proving a change of the Sabbath. But only one text (Acts 20:7) is claimed from the book of Acts for first-day observance, and we have shown from the facts stated in that chapter, that the disciples were in meeting the first part of that day—Saturday night—and journeyed the last part—Sunday. We will now show that apostolic example is on the side of the Sabbath.

Acts 13:42: "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." The Gentiles had no respect for the Sabbath, but, rather, were opposed to the institution honored by the Jews; yet they invite this Christian minister to preach the same discourse to them the next Sabbath. "And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."

Chap. 16:13: "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made, and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither." This Sabbath meeting was not held in a Jewish synagogue. Lydia believed, and was baptized, and her household. But was the Sabbath Paul's regular preaching day? Was this his manner? Let chapter 17:2, answer. "And Paul, as *his manner was*, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures."

Chap. 18:1-11, contains important testimony on this subject. Paul at Corinth abode with Aquila and Priscilla, and worked with them at tent-making. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." Verse 4. How long did he remain at Corinth? "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Verse 11. Here is apostolic

example for seventy-eight successive Sabbaths. And it will be seen by verses 5-8, that the apostle occupied the synagogue a part of these Sabbaths, until the Jews opposed and blasphemed, then he went into the house of Justus, where he preached to the Gentiles the remaining number of Sabbaths.

Here, dear reader, is apostolic example in harmony with that divine precept which was spoken under circumstances of awful grandeur from Sinai, and written with the finger of God; hence it has tremendous force.

CREATION AND REDEMPTION.

Christians who take the Bible as the rule of truth and duty freely admit that before Christ the seventh day of the week was observed in commemoration of the rest of the Creator on the seventh day of the first week, after he had completed the six days of creation. This position is fully sustained by the record of the first seventh day, Gen. 2:1-3, and by the Sabbath precept of Ex. 20:8-11.

But it is asserted that the work of redemption is greater than the work of creation, and that Christians should no longer observe the seventh day in commemoration of the completion of the work of creation; but they should now observe the first day in commemoration of the completion of the work of redemption at the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week. These assertions sound out well from Sunday pulpits, and read smoothly in print to those who wish them true; and if they were sustained by the Bible, the Christian world could safely anchor in them. But what spoils this pleasing fabric is the fact that there is not a single text in all the word of God to sustain it.

Redemption greater than creation? Our first-day friends themselves are compelled to admit that God has never said this. What right, then, has any man

to make such an assertion, and then base the change of the Sabbath upon it? But suppose that redemption is greater than creation, who knows that we should observe a day of the week to commemorate it? God has not required men to keep any day as a memorial of redemption.

But if it were a duty to observe one day of the week for this reason, most certainly the crucifixion day presents the strongest claims. It is not said that we have redemption through Christ's resurrection; but it is said that we have redemption through the shedding of his blood. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Rev. 5:9. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12, 15. Then redemption is through the death of the Lord Jesus; consequently the day on which he shed his precious blood to redeem us, and said, "It is finished," John 19:30, is the day that should be kept as a memorial of redemption, if any day should be observed for that purpose.

Nor can it be pleaded that the resurrection day is the most remarkable day in the history of the first advent of our Lord. It needs but a word to prove that in this respect it is far exceeded by the day of the crucifixion. Which is the more remarkable, the act of the Father in giving his beloved and only Son to die for a race of rebels, or the act of that Father in raising that beloved Son from the dead? There is only one answer that can be given: It was not remarkable that God should raise his Son from the dead; but the act of the Father in giving his Son to die for sinners was a spectacle of redeeming love on which the universe might gaze, and adore the wondrous love of God to all eternity. Who

can wonder that the sun was veiled in darkness, and that all nature trembled at the sight! The crucifixion day, therefore, has far greater claims than the day of the resurrection. But God has not enjoined the observance of either. And is it not a fearful act to make void the commandments of God by that wisdom which is folly in his sight? 1 Cor. 1:19, 20.

The learned and godly Paul lived, and preached, and wrote, after the resurrection of Christ. And he is so far from teaching that the first day of the week should be observed to commemorate redemption, that he exhorts the church, in view of a future day of redemption, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. 4:30. And Christ speaks of his second coming, and the signs of that event, in these words: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look-up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:27, 28. The day of redemption is still future. But when the Lord shall appear the second time to finish the plan of redemption, to give immortality to all his saints, to remove the curse from the earth, and "make all things new," then if it please God that the redeemed family shall observe the first, or any other day of the week, to commemorate the completion of redemption, those who observe the Bible Sabbath here will be very happy to take part in that grand celebration. But meanwhile we will be content, while waiting for the day of redemption, to celebrate the Rest of the Lord on the day in which the Creator rested from his work of creation. Our Sunday friends are just one dispensation ahead of time.

But if Christians would commemorate our Lord's death and resurrection, the great events which lie at the very foundation of the plan of human redemption,

there is no need of robbing the Lord's rest-day of its holiness in order to do it. When truth takes from us our errors it always has something better to take their place. So, the false memorial of redemption being taken out of the way, the word presents in its stead those which are true. God has provided us with memorials bearing his own signature; and these we may observe with the blessing of Heaven. Would you commemorate the death of our Lord? You need not keep the day of his crucifixion. The Bible tells you how to do it. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. 11: 23-26.

Would you commemorate the burial and resurrection of the Saviour? You need not keep the first day of the week. The Lord ordained a very different and far more appropriate memorial. "Know ye not that so many of us as are baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Rom. 6: 3-5. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Col. 2: 12. The Catholic and Protestant churches have changed this ordinance to sprinkling, so that this

divine memorial of the Lord's resurrection is destroyed. And that they may add sin to sin, they lay hold of the Lord's Sabbath and change it to the first day of the week, thus destroying the sacred memorial of the Creator's rest, that they may have a memorial of Christ's resurrection. May God help the reader to decide for truth, obey the word, taste the sweets of obedience, stand in the coming contest, and suffer with Christ here and reign with him in his kingdom forever.

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