

Thoughts on the Seventh-Day Sabbath (Contra Sabbatarianism)

Luke 24.25-26 *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?*

Ro. 3.1-8 *What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

Q. 54. *Which is the fourth commandment? A. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the 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 seventh day and hallowed it (Exo 20:8-11; Deu 5:12-15)* reads William Gadsby's Catechism. Be it the Seventh-Day Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists or others, many under the illusion popery altered the sabbath refuse to worship on the first day, Sunday, of the week. I shall commend the reader to John Bunyan's *Q.s About the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh Day Sabbath* for a more thorough treatise of this subject, as well as the First and Second London Baptist (Philadelphia) Confessions with the Baptist Catechism of 1693 by William Collins. I do not endeavor to A. all the objections of the cultists; rather, it is more profitable to ask, *What is the sabbath, and between what parties was this sign given?*

The A. to this query lies within the prophets, particularly Nehemiah chapter nine in addition to Ezekiel 20. Our first Q. is, *What is the sabbath?* The sabbath was created in Genesis by God when he rested on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 1.29-2.3) as a hallowed rest; yet, that rest was good, for Jehovah has done it. The second Q. asked is, *Between what parties was this sign given?*, to which we reply in the words of Christ, that the sabbath was not made for man, but man for the sabbath, ergo, the Son of man is the Lord of the sabbath (Mk. 2.23-28). In this general sense, the text states the sabbath is a way whereby man meets

his chief end in glorifying God, namely, not in keeping a sabbath Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Japheth, Balak, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Israel or Joseph and the twelve patriarchs never knew, but that of Moses and the twelve tribes. Q. 2: *What is the chief end of man? A.: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. 1 Cor. 10:31; Ps. 73:25-26.*

We observe in the inspired words of Nehemiah –

Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous: And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

Not one of the blessed fathers before the Noahdic Flood knew a sabbath. Not one of them kept a sabbath, for at that time the only command given was capital punishment (Gen. 9.5-6) for killers; the only example of a sacrifice was Abel's firstling lambs of Genesis 4.4. *Thou*

camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. The Hebrew sabbâth demarcates an intermission. The Greek noun σαββασιον means a daily or weekly repose from secular vocations, notes Strong's Concordance of the Whole Bible. How strange that Sabbatarianism seeks to bind by works of the law where no flesh is justified, rather than to allow the liberty to penitently enjoy a picture of the Lord's eternal rest! Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (Ro. 3.19-20).

The next text is Ezekiel 20.

But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the

LORD your God.

Dr John Gill states on the chapter of the prophet of God's strength from his *Exposition of the Bible* the lamentably deplorable state of Israel six centuries preceeding the son of David –

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 20

The prophecy in this chapter is occasioned by some of the elders of Israel coming to inquire of the Lord; when the prophet is bid to tell them that he would not be inquired of by them. The reason of which were their abominations he is ordered to make known unto them, Eze 20:1; and then proceeds the narration of them; first of what their fathers committed in Egypt; of God's goodness to them, and their ingratitude; how that though he promised and swore that he would bring them from thence, when he charged them to abstain from the idolatry of that people where they were, nevertheless they did not, for which he threatened them with his wrath to consume them; yet such was his goodness as to spare them, and bring them out of that land, Eze 20:5; being brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, the Lord gave them statutes and ordinances to observe, particularly sabbaths, as a sign between him and them, but these they despised and broke; wherefore the Lord threatened to consume them in the wilderness, and not bring them into the land of Canaan; yet such was his kindness and mercy to them, that he did not make an utter end of them in the wilderness, Eze 20:10; and whereas he exhorted their posterity not to imitate their parents, but to walk in his statutes and judgments, and observe his sabbaths, yet they would not; which drew out his resentment against them, and he threatened to scatter them among the Heathens; but, for his name's sake, that that might not be polluted among the heathen, he spared them, and did not cut them off, only gave them up to do things very pernicious to them, Eze 20:18; and even when they were brought into the land of Canaan, they were guilty of blasphemy against God, and of idolatry on every high hill they saw, Eze 20:27; but whereas it might be objected, what is all this to the present generation? it is observed, that they imitated their fathers, and were guilty of the same idolatries, and therefore the Lord would not be inquired of by them, Eze 20:30; and threatens to rule them with fury, and plead with them, as he had pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness, Eze 20:32; nevertheless he suggests that there would be a remnant among them, when he should have purged the rebels and transgressors from them, that he would deal graciously with in a covenant way; who should serve him in his holy mountain, where he would require and accept their sacrifices, in whom he would be sanctified; and who should know him, and loathe themselves, when made sensible of the distinguishing favours

bestowed upon them, Eze 20:37; and the chapter is closed with a prophecy dropped against Jerusalem, denouncing utter destruction on it, Eze 20:45.

However, nowhere in the gospel is it commanded to keep the seventh-day obsolete sabbath, and which of the *sabbaths* shall the believer keep? It is not in the Beatitudes of Matthew's fifth chapter, for what a better place would there be for the Messiah to state obedience to the law; *Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life (II Co. 3.6). And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* Rather, on the first day, the Testator arose. The Jerusalem synod of Acts fifteen met on the first day. The sabbath of the New Testament is now the day of the Lord, for there is no command to keep the sabbaths signed in bullock's blood to Moses in the better covenant, not that which is ready to wax away (Heb. 8-12)! *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.* Amen closes the epistle to the Hebrews.

Let the reader study these passages listed in the venerable 1693 Catechism.

Q. 63: Which is the fourth commandment? A.: The fourth commandment is, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but 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 manservant, 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."

Exodus 20:8-11 Q. 64: What is required in the fourth commandment? A.: The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His

Word, expressly one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to Himself. Lev. 19:30; Deut. 5:12 Q. 65: Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath? A.: From the creation 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. Gen. 2:3; Jn. 20:19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; Rev. 1:10 Q. 66: How is the Sabbath to be sanctified? A.: The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy. Lev. 23:3; Isa. 58:13, 14; Isa. 66:23; Matt. 12:11, 12 Q. 67: What is forbidden in the fourth commandment? A.: The fourth commandment forbids the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about worldly employments or recreations. Ezek. 22:26; 23:38; Jer. 17:21; Neh. 13:15, 17; Acts 20:7 Q. 93: What is faith in Jesus Christ? A.: Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel. Heb. 10:39; Jn. 1:12; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 2:15, 16 Q. 94: What is repentance unto life? A.: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience. Acts 2:37; Joel 2:13; Jer.31:18, 19; 2 Cor. 7:10, 11; Rom. 6:18.