

Of the Place and Time of Public Worship.

by John Gill

John Gill discusses the importance of place and time in public worship, tracing historical practices and theological implications.

Scripture: Genesis 2:2

Topics: "Public Worship", "Sabbath Observance"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the significance of the place and time of public worship, tracing the evolution of worship locations from the tabernacle in the wilderness to the eventual establishment of the temple in Jerusalem. He discusses the historical context of worship practices, noting that the early patriarchs worshipped in their homes and built altars in various locations. Gill argues that the seventh-day Sabbath was not a universal command from creation but was specifically given to the Israelites, while the first day of the week emerged as the primary day of worship for Christians, reflecting the resurrection of Christ. He concludes that worship should be conducted in a manner that honors God, regardless of the specific day chosen, as long as it is done with reverence and purpose.

Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 3--Chapter 8

OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP, AS TO PLACE AND TIME

The circumstances of "place" and "time" of public worship deserve consideration; since for public worship there must be some certain "place" to meet and worship in, and some stated "time" to worship at. As to the first of these, it may soon be dispatched; since there does not appear to be any place appointed for it until the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness. It is probable that there was some certain place where our first parents worshipped, after their expulsion from the garden of Eden; whither Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices, and offered them; but where it was is not easy to say; perhaps the cherubim and flaming sword, at the east of the garden of Eden, were the symbols of the divine presence, since the Lord is frequently represented as dwelling between the cherubim; which may have respect, as to the cherubim in the tabernacle and temple, so to these; and there might be a stream of light, splendour, and glory, an emblem of the Shekinah, or divine Majesty, which had then appeared in the form of a flaming sword; and now near to this, or however in sight of it, might be the place of public worship; and hence when Cain was

driven front these parts, he is said to be "hid from the face of God," and to go out "from the presence of the Lord," (Gen. 3:24, 4:3, 4, 14, 16).

As for the patriarchs in succeeding times, before the flood, it does not appear that they had any other places to worship in but their own houses, where families might agree to meet, and worship in them in turn and course. And the patriarchs after the flood, as they were strangers, sojourners, and travellers in the earth; they built altars here and there for their convenience, and where they worshipped. Abraham in his travels came to a place near Bethel, as it was afterwards called, and built an altar, and worshipped; and on his return from Egypt he came to the same place again, and there worshipped as before (Gen. 12:8, 13:3, 4).

Jacob, in his travels, came to a place called Luz, and where he remarkably enjoyed the divine presence, and thought it no other than the house of God, and therefore set up a stone for a pillar, and said it should be the house of God; and called the name of the place Bethel; and which God so honoured as to call himself by the name of the "God of Bethel;" and hither, with his family, he came many years after, and erected an altar unto God (Gen. 28:17-22, 31:13, 35:6, 7). There does not seem to be any settled place of worship until the tabernacle was built in the wilderness; and then every man was to bring his offering to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and there offer it, before the tabernacle of the Lord (Lev. 17:4, 5), and this tabernacle was moveable from place to place; not only while in the wilderness, but when the Israelites were come into the land of Canaan: it was first at Gilgal, then at Shiloh, after that at Nob and Gibeon; hence the Lord says, he had not dwelt in an house, in any fixed place, from the time the Israelites came out of Egypt; as if he had before[1]; but had walked in a tent, in a tabernacle (2 Sam. 7:6).

It had been said by the Lord, that when the Israelites came into the land that was given them, there would be a place chosen of God to dwell in, and where all offerings were to be brought, and feasts kept (Deut. 12:10, 11), the name of the place was not mentioned, but it eventually appeared, that the city of Jerusalem, and the temple there, were meant; and the place where the temple was to be built was first discovered by David, and shown to Solomon; and which was confirmed to him by the Lord himself, to be the place he had chosen for an house of sacrifice (1 Chron. 22:1; 2 Chron. 7:12), and this continued a place of worship until destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; and after the Jews' return from the Babylonish captivity it was rebuilt, and remained to the times of Christ.

Indeed, after the captivity, there were synagogues erected in various parts of the land of Judea, which were a sort of chapels of ease, where prayer was made, and Moses and the prophets read and expounded on Sabbath days; but no sacrifices were offered in them, nor any of the yearly feasts kept there: and whereas there had been, before the times of Christ, there still was a controversy between the Jews and Samaritans, whether the temple at Jerusalem or mount Gerizzim, were the place of worship; this was decided by our Lord, who declared that the time was coming, that neither at the one place nor at the other, should God be worshipped; but everywhere (John 4:20, 21), as the apostle also says (1 Tim. 2:8), and, indeed, since, under the gospel dispensation, as was foretold, the name of the Lord should be great among the Gentiles, from the rising of the sun to the going down of it; and offerings of prayer and praise should be offered to him in every place (Mal. 1:11).

No one place could be fixed on for all the nations of the earth to meet and worship in; and saints are now therefore at liberty to build places of worship for their convenience wherever they please, as the first Christians did, and continued to do. But the circumstance of "time," or a stated day of worship, requires more particular consideration; it having been a matter of controversy which has exercised the minds of

good and learned men, for a century or two past, and not yet decided to the satisfaction of all parties; and in order to obtain what satisfaction we can, it will be proper to inquire, 1.

What day has been, or is observed, as a stated time of public worship; with the reasons thereof. And, 1a. First, it has been thought and asserted, that the seventh day from the creation was enjoined Adam in a state of innocence, as a day of public and religious worship, and so to be observed by his posterity in after times; but if it was enjoined Adam in his state of innocence, it must be either by the law of nature, written on his heart, or by a positive law given him. 1a1.

First, it does not seem to be the law of nature written on his heart; for then, 1a1a. He must be bound to keep a Sabbath before the institution of it; he was created on the sixth day, after the image of God; one part of which was the law of nature, written on his heart; but the institution of the Sabbath day was not until the seventh day, if it was then; for it is yet a matter of question. 1a1b. There would have been some remains of it in his posterity after the fall; and even among the Gentiles, for these have the "law written in their hearts," (Rom. 2:14) but now it does not appear that they were ever directed by the law and light of nature to observe the seventh day of the week as an holy Sabbath; what has been alleged in favour of it will be considered hereafter. 1a1c.

Was this the case, it would have been reinscribed with other laws in more legible characters on the hearts of God's people in regeneration, according to the promise in the covenant of grace (Heb. 8:10), and had the law of the seventh day Sabbath been one of them, it must easily have been discerned by them; and the observance of it would have been out of question. Nor, 1a2. Secondly, does it seem to be enjoined Adam, by any positive law; and, indeed, if it had been written on his heart, as a branch of the law of nature, there would have been no need of any such law to have directed and instructed him; and to have a positive law given him, to keep a seventh day Sabbath, without any positive rules and directions what worship should be observed by him on that day, which do not appear, the law would have been useless; we have no account of any positive law given to Adam in a state of innocence, but that which forbade eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; which tree, and its fruit, we know nothing of; and did we, that law would not be binding upon us.

The proof of such a law, with respect to the Sabbath, is founded, 1a2a. On Genesis 2:2, 3, where it is said, that God having ended his work, "rested on the seventh day, and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it". But, 1a2a1. No mention is made of a Sabbath, and of the sanctification of that, as in the fourth command (Ex. 20:11), only of the seventh day, and not of that as a Sabbath. 1a2a2. The words are a narrative of what God did himself; but do not contain a precept of what Adam should do; they only declare what God did, that he blessed and sanctified the seventh day; but do not enjoin Adam to keep it holy, as a Sabbath. 1a2a3.

At most they seem only to design a destination of that day to holy service hereafter; God "blessed" it, that is, pronounced it an happy day; all his works being finished, and man, an holy creature, the crown and glory of all, made after his image[2]: on a survey of which, God rested, and took delight, pleasure, and refreshment in them, on the seventh day; which he "sanctified," not by keeping it holy himself, nor by imparting any holiness to it, which a day is not capable of; but he separated, or set it apart for holy use in after time, which is a very common sense of this word: so Jeremiah was sanctified before he was born; that is, appointed and ordained to be a holy prophet; which purpose was not carried into execution until some time after; and so God might be said to sanctify or set apart in his mind and purpose the seventh day to be an holy Sabbath in future time; though it was not actually executed, as it should seem by what

will be hereafter observed, until many hundred years after the creation.

Besides, 1a2a4. The words in Genesis 2:2, 3, are understood by many learned men proleptically, or by way of anticipation; as other things are in this same chapter; so some places are called by the names they bore in the times of Moses, which they had not from the beginning (see Gen. 2:11-14); or the words may be considered as in a parenthesis; and the rather, since had they been read, or to be read, in common with the preceding, the word "God," and the phrase the "seventh day," would have been omitted; and have been read, "and he blessed and sanctified it;" and the reason for it, which follows, seems manifestly taken from the fourth command, as given on Mount Sinai (Ex. 20:11), and Moses writing his history of the creation, after this precept was given, took the opportunity of inserting this whole passage, to give the greater sanction to it with the Israelites. 1a2a5.

After all, be it that the text in Genesis enjoins the keeping the seventh day from the creation as a Sabbath; which seventh day now cannot be known by any people or persons whatever, it could never be the same with the Jewish seventh day Sabbath; for that was to be observed after six days labour of man; "Six days shalt thou labour," &c. whereas this could be only after the six days labour of God, who rested from his work on the seventh; but it was Adam's first day, and could not with any propriety be called a rest from labour to him, when, as yet, he had not laboured at all: such a Sabbath was not suitable to him in a state of innocence, which supposes imperfection and sin; the creature would not have been in bondage had he not sinned, this was the effect of the fall; Adam, in innocence, had no manservant nor maidservant, nor any cattle in a state of bondage, groaning under burdens, to rest from their labours.

This is a law merely calculated for sinful man. 1a2b. The other remaining proof of such a law so early is taken from Hebrews 4:3, 4, where no mention is made of a seventh day Sabbath; and in which the apostle takes notice of the several rests which had been under the former dispensation, and shows, that neither of them was the rest promised, and had, under the gospel dispensation: not the seventh day rest from the creation, for that was God's rest: not the rest of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, which Joshua gave them; for then David, a long time after, would not have spoken of another day of rest, the gospel dispensation, into which believers now enter.

Upon the whole, it must appear at least very dubious and uncertain, that there was any institution of a seventh day Sabbath from the creation; and especially when it is considered, 1b. Secondly, that there is no proof of the patriarchs from Adam to the times of Moses observing such a day. For, 1b1. We nowhere read of any law being given them for the observation of the seventh day Sabbath; Adam and Eve had a law which forbid the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; which Tertullian calls the primordial law; Abel was taught the law of sacrifices; Noah had the laws which forbid eating the blood with the flesh of a beast alive, and the shedding of human blood; and Abraham the law of circumcision; but neither of them had any law, as we know of, which enjoined them to observe the seventh day Sabbath.

The Jews pretend that there were seven laws given to the sons of Noah; but this of keeping the seventh day Sabbath is not among them. 1b2. Many of the religious actions of the patriarchs are taken notice of, and commended, both ceremonial and moral; as their offering of sacrifice, calling on the name of the Lord, prayer to God, and meditation on him and his works their piety, fear of God, and eschewing evil; but not a word of their observance of a seventh day Sabbath. 1b3. The sins of men, both before and after the flood, are observed, but Sabbath breaking does not appear among them.

The old world was full of violence, rapine, and oppression; and in the new world, intemperance, incest, idolatry, and other sins, men were chargeable with; but not with this: it does not appear among the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah; nor is it to be found among the abominations for which the old inhabitants of Canaan were cast out of it. But no sooner was the law of the Sabbath given to the Israelites in the wilderness, but we hear of the breach of it, and of a severe punishment of it. 1b4.

It was the general opinion of the ancient fathers of the Christian church, that the patriarchs did not observe a Sabbath, nor were obliged to it; but were righteous men, and saved without it: not Adam, nor Abel, nor Enock, nor Noah, nor Melchizedek, nor Lot, nor Abraham, nor Job, nor any before Moses; so say Justin Martyr[3], Irenaeus[4], Tertullian[5], and Eusebius[6]; by whom are mentioned particularly all the above persons, as good men, and non-observers of a Sabbath. Some have fancied that they have found instances of a seventh day Sabbath observed in the time of the patriarchs; as at the offerings of Cain and Abel, which are said to be "in process of time," or "at the end of days," (Gen. 4:3) but this phrase seems to design, not the end of a week, or seven days, no number being expressed, but rather the end of a year, days being sometimes put for a year[7]; and so refers to the harvest, at the end of the year, when the fruits of the earth were gathered in; and therefore Cain might think his sacrifice, at that time, would have been the more acceptable.

And some conjecture a Sabbath was observed by Noah, in the ark (Gen. 8:10, 12), since he is said to send out the dove again after seven days; but this number seven has respect, not to the first day of the week, from whence the days were numbered; but the first sending out of the dove, be it on what day it may. And besides, Noah might have respect to the known course of the moon, which puts on another face every seven days[8]; and which, in its increase and wane, might have an influence upon the water, which he was careful to observe and make trial of this way.

Moreover, it is observed, that in Job's time there was a day when the sons of God met together (Job 1:6, 2:1), but who these sons of God were, whether angels or men, is not certain; nor where, nor on what day they met; no mention is made of a seventh day, much less of a Sabbath; nor of a certain rotation of this day every week; nor of the distance between the first and second meeting. Arguments from this, and the above instances, must be very farfetched, and are very slight and slender grounds to build such an hypothesis upon, as the observation of a seventh day Sabbath. 1c.

Thirdly, there is no mention of a Sabbath before the descent of the manna in the wilderness of Sin: some of the Jewish writers[9] speak of it as given at Marah, a few weeks before, which they suppose is included in the word "statute," (Ex. 15:25) but this is said without any foundation; but the seventh day from the descent of the manna is expressly called a "Sabbath," (Ex. 16:23-26) and is the first we hear of, and which appears to be quite a new thing; for had the Israelites been used to a seventh day Sabbath, the rulers of the people might easily have conjectured, that the reason of twice as much bread being gathered on the sixth day, was on the account of the Sabbath being the day following, as a provision for that, had that been the case, without coming to tell Moses of it, who gave this as a reason of it to them; "Tomorrow is," or rather it should be supplied, "shall be, the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord;" for a "tomorrow" cannot be spoken of with propriety in the present tense, "is;" but as future, "shall be;" and therefore on the seventh day, when the manna ceased, which was a confirmation of it, he says to them, "see," take notice of it, as something new and wonderful, and a sufficient reason of the institution of the Sabbath, and why that day was given unto them for a Sabbath; and when the fourth command was given, a month after, it is introduced with a "memento," as the other commands are not; "Remember," what had been lately enjoined them; and that appears to be a new law; for when a man was found the breach of it, no penalty

being as yet people brought him to Moses, and he was put into the ward, until the mind of God was known concerning it (Num. 15:31-36).

Moreover, if there had been a Sabbath before the giving of the manna, the Sabbath preceding the seventh day from the descent of that, must have been the fifteenth of the month, on which day it is certain the Jews had a wearisome journey, by divine appointment, the cloud going before them (Ex. 16:1), and was concluded with gathering quails; so that it was not a day of rest to them, nor the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord. 1d. Fourthly, the seventh day Sabbath, as it was declared on the descent of the manna, that it was peculiar to the Jews; "The Lord hath given you the Sabbath;--so the people rested the seventh day" (Ex. 16:29, 30).

Song it was when it received a further sanction from the fourth precept of the decalogue. For, 1d1. The whole decalogue, or ten commands of the law of Moses, as such, were given to the Jews only[10]; as a covenant, it was made with the Israelites in the wilderness, and not even with their fathers, which were before them; and in which respect they had the preference to all other nations on earth, as Moses affirms (Deut. 5:2-21, 4:6-8), and as is affirmed by David (Ps. 147:19, 20) and by the apostle Paul, (Rom. 9:4), and which appears from the preface to the decalogue; "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" which cannot be said of any other nation. 1d2.

The fourth command is particularly and expressly declared as peculiar to them; "My Sabbaths shall ye keep," saith the Lord; "for it is a sign between me and you," and not others (Ex. 31:13), that is, of the national covenant between them. The same is repeated (Ex. 31:16, 17), where the children of Israel, as distinct from all other nations to whom it was no sign, are directed to keep the Sabbath. Song Nehemiah says, that when God spoke to the Israelites in the wilderness, he made "known to them his holy Sabbath;" which it seems had not been made known unto them before; but now was made known to them, and not to others; and is mentioned along with peculiar precepts, statutes, and laws commanded them (Neh. 9:14), and the prophet Ezekiel, from the Lord, tells the Jews, that the Lord had "given," to their fathers in the wilderness, his "Sabbaths, to be a sign between him and them;" it is not said he restored them, but "gave" them, denoting a new institution, and as peculiarly belonging to them: and this is the sense of the Jewish nation in general[11], that the Sabbath only belongs to them, and that the Gentiles are not obliged to keep it; for though a Gentile proselyte or stranger within the gate, for the sake of national decorum, and to avoid offence and scandal, was to do no work on it for an Israelite, yet he might for himself, as the Jews interpret it[12]; but then this supposes, that a stranger not within the gate, was not obliged to observe it.

Besides, some of the Jewish writers understand this stranger, or proselyte, of a proselyte of righteousness, who was under equal obligation to the commands of the law as a Jew. 1d3. The time and place when and where this precept was given, with the reason of it, show that it was peculiar to the Jews; it was given them in the wilderness, after they were come out of Egypt; and their deliverance from thence is expressly observed, as the reason why it was commanded them (Deut. 5:15).

The Lord's resting on the seventh day from his works of creation, is used as an argument to enforce the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath, now enjoined; but not as a reason of the institution of it. 1d4. None but Jews were ever charged with the breach of the seventh day Sabbath; the children of Israel were charged with it in the wilderness, soon after it was enjoined them (Ezek. 20:20, 21, 23, 24), so in Nehemiah's time, though the Tyrians, who sold fish to the Jews on Sabbath days, were threatened, and shut out of the city, and forbid to come there with their goods; yet it was the Jews who bought them, who are charged with the profanation of the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-20), and it was the sense of the Jews, that

the Gentiles are not to be punished for the breach of it; yea, rather, that they are punishable for keeping it[13]; they having no other laws binding upon them: but the seven laws they speak of, as given to the sons of Noah. 1d5.

The law of observing the seventh day Sabbath is not of a moral nature; was it, it would be binding on all mankind, Jews and Gentiles; and could not have been dispensed with, nor abolished, as it is (Matthew 12:1-12; Col. 2:16, 17), and if such, as has been observed, it must have been written on the heart of Adam, when created; and would be, not only reinscribed on the hearts of regenerate men, but even the work of it would appear to be written on the hearts of Gentiles, as their consciences would bear witness; whereas it does not appear.

Some, indeed, pretend to say, that the seventh day of the week was reckoned holy with the Gentiles; but of all the instances produced from Clemens and Eusebius, there is but one now extant among the poets, and that is in Hesiod; and the seventh day he speaks of as holy, is not the seventh day of the week, but the seventh day of the month, the birthday of Apollo, as the poet himself suggests, and the Scholiasts[14] on him; which was the seventh day of the month Thargelion, kept sacred at Athens on that account; hence Apollo was called Ebdomegena[15].

As for the Jews' seventh day Sabbath, the Heathen writers[16] speak of it as having its origin from Moses, and as peculiar to the Jews[17], and the day itself was held by them in the utmost contempt (see Lam. 1:7); there is scarce a poet of theirs[18] but has a lash at it, and at the Jews on account of it; and represent them as a parcel of idle people, who keep that day to indulge themselves in sloth; the principal day of the week sacred with the Gentiles, was the first day of the week, dedicated to the sun, and from thence called Sunday: so that if any argument can be drawn from the observation of the heathens, it is in favour of the Christian, and not of the Jewish Sabbath. 1d6.

It is impracticable and impossible, that a seventh day Sabbath should be kept by all people, in all nations of the world, at the same time exactly and precisely. It was and could only be observed by the Jews themselves, when they were together under a certain meridian; it cannot be kept now by them, as they are scattered about in distant parts of the world, with any precision, at the same time; such an hypothesis proceeds upon a false notion that the earth is plain, and has everywhere the same horizon, and is not globular, nor having horizons, and meridians, and degrees of longitude different in every place and country; which latter is most certainly true.

If the earth is a globe, consisting of two hemispheres, when it is day on one side of the globe, it is night on the other; so that let the Sabbath begin at what time you please; if from sun setting, as the Jews begin theirs, and continue it to sun setting the next day; when it is sun setting with us, it is sunrising with those in the other hemisphere; and so "vice versa;" and if it is begun at midnight, and continued to midnight, as with us; when it is midnight on one side the globe, it will be midday, or noon, on the other: so in each case there must be half a day's difference in the exact time of the Sabbath; and according to the variations in horizons, meridians, and longitudes, will the day differ.

If therefore the earth is a globe, as it is certain, it is; and as horizons, meridians, and longitudes differ, as they most certainly do, then it is impossible that the same exact precise time should be every where kept; and God has never commanded that which is impossible. Besides, it may be observed, that in Greenland, and other northern countries, for several months together, there is no sun rising nor sun setting, and so no days to be distinguished that way, the sun being at such a time always above the horizon; so that a

Sabbath day, consisting of twenty four hours, or of a day and a night, cannot be observed in such parts of the world; nay, it has been made to appear, that one and the same day, at one and the same place, may be Friday, Saturday, and what is called Sunday.

Supposing a Turk, whose Sabbath is Friday, and a Jew, whose Sabbath is Saturday, and a Christian, whose Sabbath is the first day of the week, dwell together; the Turk and the Christian set out on their travels at the same time, leaving the Jew where he was; the Turk by travelling westward loses a day, and the Christian travelling eastward gets one; so that both compassing the world, and meeting together again at the same place, the Jew continuing where he was, the same day will be Friday to the Turk, a Saturday to the Jew, and Sunday to the Christian; so Dr.

Hevlin[19]. Those that travel round the world westward, it is observed by others[20], as this makes their days longer, so they find fewer in compassing the globe, losing one day in tale, though they lose no time; so that if the Sabbath of their nation was the seventh, they would find it their sixth on their return: and those that travel eastward, as their days are shorter, are more in number, and gain one in tale; and on their return, would find their eighth, or first day of the week, to be the nation's Sabbath.

Song there would be three Sabbaths kept in a nation, and all exactly observing time. It may be said, the same objection will lie against the first day as the seventh. It is granted; but then we observe that on another footing, as will be seen presently. 1e. Fifthly, the first day of the week, or Lord's day, is now the day of worship observed by the generality of Christians; upon what account, and by what authority, must be our next inquiry. Not by virtue of any positive precept, or express command of Christ, for which there is none; wherefore some great and good men, as Calvin[21], Beza[22], Zanchius[23], and others, have been of opinion that it was a matter of pure choice, in the first churches, and a branch of their Christian liberty; who were left free, as to choose a place where, so the time when to worship; and therefore fixed on this day, and substituted it in the room of the Jewish Sabbath, antiquated, as being most proper and suitable, and having the sanction of an apostolic practice; to which I have been inclined to agree; only cannot but be of opinion, that the practice and examples of the apostles of Christ, men respired by the Holy Spirit, who wrote, taught, and practised no other than agreeable to "the commandments of the Lord," (Matthew 28:20; 1 Cor. 14:37) carry in them the nature, force, and obligation of a precept.

Song though there is no express command for infant baptism, yet had it been countenanced, as it has not been, by the like practice and examples of the apostles, we should have judged it our duty to have followed such a practice and such examples; it is upon this footing we observe the first day of the week, as being 1e1. The most proper and suitable day for divine worship; as the change of the day of worship was necessary, there being a new dispensation, and new ordinances of divine service; and to testify to the world our faith of Christ's coming, death, and resurrection from the dead no day was so proper as the first day of the week, which immediately followed upon, and was the next remove from the seventh day Sabbath, now abrogated; so that the Christian church was never without a day of worship, pointed at so early by the practice of the apostles, who met that very first day of the week on which Christ rose from the dead; and which further shows the propriety and suitability of this day as a day of rest; Christ had now finished the great work of our redemption and salvation; and so ceased from his work, as God did from his; and it may be further observed, that after our Lord's resurrection from the dead, we never read, throughout the whole New Testament, that ever the Jews' seventh day Sabbath was kept by any Christian assembly; only the first day of the week.

Song that, 1e2. The observation of this day is confirmed by the practice and examples of the disciples of Christ, and of the first churches; for, 1e2a. On the very day Christ rose from the dead, which was the first day of the week, the disciples assembled together, and Christ appeared in the midst of them, and by his gracious presence and divine instructions, showed his approbation of their thus meeting together, and encouraged them to it; and on that day week they met again, and Christ again stood in the midst of them; now though there had been a seventh day preceding this, the disciples did not assemble on that day, but on this, and Christ with them (John 20:19, 29). 1e2b.

The apostles met together on the day, of Pentecost, which was the first day of the week, as has been proved by many learned writers. Just before our Lord's ascension, he ordered his disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Spirit; and though there were two Jewish seventh day Sabbaths before Pentecost, from the time of his ascension, yet it does not appear that they met together on either of them; but on this day they did; and it looks as if they had an order from Christ to meet on it, and a promise from Christ that they should then have the Spirit descend upon them; and therefore it seems they were waiting for that day, in expectation of having the promise fulfilled on and hence it is said, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place," (Acts 2:1) and this day was honoured and confirmed by the miraculous effusion of the Spirit, by preaching the gospel to men of all nations, and by the conversion and baptism of three thousand persons. 1e2c.

It was on the first day of the week that the disciples at Troas met together to break bread, when Paul preached unto them (Acts 20:7). Now he had been there seven days before, so that there must have been in that time a seventh day Sabbath of the Jews; but it does not appear that he and they assembled on that day; but only on the first, and that for religious worship, he, to break bread to celebrate the Supper of the Lord, and they, to hear him preach. 1e2d. The apostle Paul gave orders to the church at Corinth, as he had to the churches of Galatia, to make a collection for the poor saints on the first day of the week, when met together (1 Cor. 16:1, 2) which shows that it was usual to meet on that day; yea, it implies an order, or the renewal and confirmation of an order, to meet on that day, or otherwise how should the collection be made on it; and what day so proper as when the saints meet for divine worship, and their hearts are warmed and refreshed with the word and ordinances.

In an ancient copy, mentioned by Beza on the place, after "the first day of the week," it is added, by way of explanation, the "Lord's day;" and also in others[24]; and so Jerome[25] explains it. 1e2e. This is the day John means by the "Lord's day," when he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," (Rev. 1:10) he speaks of it as then a well known name of it; so called because Christ rose from the dead on it; in commemoration of which it was kept, and in which his gospel was preached and ordinances administered; for it was now upwards of sixty years from the resurrection of Christ to John's being an exile in Patmos, where he wrote his Revelation; and this day was observed as a day of religious worship in the earliest ages of Christianity.

Ignatius[26], who died but eight or ten years after the apostle John, says, "Let us keep the Lord's day, on which our Life arose." And Justin Martyr[27], a few years after him, says, on the day commonly called Sunday (by the heathens, meaning the first day of the week) all met together in city and country for divine worship. Dionysius of Corinth, speaks of the Lord's day as an holy day[28], and Clemens of Alexandria[29], in the same century, observes, that he that truly keeps the Lord's day glorifies the resurrection of the Lord.

Tertullian[30], in the beginning of the third century, speaks of the acts of public worship, as "Lord's day solemnities". And in the same century Origen[31] and Cyprian[32] make mention of the first day as the "Lord's day," and the time of worship; and so it has been in all ages to the present time. Now upon the whole, since it does not appear that a seventh day Sabbath was enjoined Adam in innocence; nor that the patriarchs ever observed it; and that the first mention of it was at the giving of the manna; and that it was ordered to be observed by the Jews, and them only, by the fourth precept of the decalogue, since abrogated; and that the first day of the week, or Lord's day, is substituted in its room, as the day of worship, by the practice and example of the apostles; there surely can remain no scruple about the observance of the latter: but if, after all, the fourth command, with the morality of it, hangs upon the minds of any; be it that that command is still in force, though not granting it, which would bring us back to Judaism, and into a state of bondage; and allow it all the morality that can be ascribed to a day; according to the letter of it, it requires no more nor other than this, a rest on the seventh day, after six days labour; it does not direct to any epoch from whence it is to begin, as from the creation of the world, the seventh day from which the greatest mathematician in the world cannot assure us which it is, nor even the year of the creation; it only directs to, and regards the seventh day from whence a man begins to labour in whatsoever place or country he lives; nor does it direct to any set time or hour when to begin these seven days, or by what names to call the days of the week; the rule is only, "Six days shall thou labour and do all thy work," or thou mayest if thou wilt, "but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God;" and such an account of time as is made in whatsoever place a man lives, is to be taken, and of which every man is capable; it does not require he should be a skilful mathematician a man that uses the spade, or follows the plough, is capable of counting six days, on which he has wrought, and when he comes to the seventh, he must know it is not his own, but the Lord's; and such an account a man may keep, let him live on what side of the globe he will; in Europe or in America, north or south; in Great Britain, or in the East and West Indies: nor is the observation of the first day any objection to this rule, since that is after six days labour; the very first day on which Christ rose, kept by his disciples, was after six days labour; for the Jews' sabbath being between that and the six days labour can be no objection, since that was a day of rest, and not of labour; so that for that time there were two successive days of rest, after the six days of labour; when, upon the next return of the first, which was immediately after, it proceeded regularly, as it does now.

In short, the only safe rule to go by is, that of the apostles, be the day what it may; "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord," (Rom. 14:6) or he ought so to do. Which leads me to observe, 2. In what manner the Lord's day is to be regarded or observed; not to ourselves, to our own profit and pleasure; but to the Lord, to his service and glory. 2a. Not as a Jewish Sabbath; with such strictness and severity as not to kindle a fire, dress any manner of food, and travel no further than what is called a Sabbath day's journey; though perhaps these were not enjoined with the strictness some have imagined.

But, 2b. We are not to do our own work; that is, to follow any trade, business, or occupation employed in on other days; otherwise there are works of piety, mercy, and charity to be done; and also of necessity, for the preservation of life, the comfort and health of it, our own or others. 2c. It is to be employed more especially in acts of public worship, in assembling together for that purpose, in preaching, and hearing the word preached, in prayer and singing praises. 2d. In private acts of devotion, both before and after public worship; such as has been already observed, when the duty of public hearing the word was considered. 2e.

The whole of the day should be observed, from morning to evening; the early part should not be indulged in sleep, nor any part spent in doing a man's own business, in casting up his accounts, and setting right

his shop books; nor in carnal pleasures and recreations, in games and sports; nor in walking in the fields; nor in taking needless journeys. But besides public worship, men should attend to reading the scriptures, prayer and meditation, and Christian conferences; and in such pious exercises should they spend the whole day. ENDNOTES:

[1] See my Note on 1 Chron. xvii. 5. See Gill on "1 Chron. 17:1".

[2] Vid. Heidegger. Hist. Patriarch. Exercit. 3. s. 58. p. 109.

[3] Dialog. cum Trypho. p. 236, 240, 241, 245, 261, 319.

[4] Adv. Haeres. I. 4. c. 30.

[5] Adv. Judaeos, c. 2, 3, 4.

[6] Hist. Eccl. I. 1. c. 2, 4. Demonstr. Evangel. I. 1. c. 6. & Praepar. Evangel. I. 7. c. 6. p. 304.

[7] Vid. Heidegger. Hist. Patriarch. Exercit. 5. s. 18. p. 178.

[8] Ibid. Exercit. 18. s. 32. p. 562.

[9] T. Sanhedrin, fol. 56. 2. Seder Olam Zuta, p. 101. Ed. Meyer. Yalkut, par. 1 fol. 73. 2, 3.

[10] Vid. Zanchii. Oper. tom. 4. I. 1. c. 11. p. 222, 223.

[11] Zohar in Exod. fol. 26. 4. T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 59. 1. Bartenora in Misn. Sabbath, c. 24. s. 1.

[12] T. Bab. Ceritot, fol. 9. 1. Piske Tosephot Yebamot, art. 84. Maimon. Hilchot Sabbath, c. 20. s. 14.

[13] T. Bab. Betza, fol. 16. 1. & Sanhedrin, fol. 58. 2. & 59. 1. Bemigdar Rabb. fol. 234. 4. Maimon. Hilchot, Melachim, c. 10. s. 9.

[14] Proclus & Moschepulus in ibid.

[15] Plutarch. Sympos. I. 8. c. 1.

[16] Justin e Trogo, I. 36. c. 2. Tacit. Hist. I. 5. c. 4.

[17] "Cultaque Judaeo septima Sacra viro," Ovid. de arte amandi, I. 1.

[18] Juvenal. Satyr. 6. v. 158. Satyr. 14. v. 105, 106. Pers. Satyr. 5. v. 184. Martial. I. 4. ep. 4. vid. Senecam apud Aug. de Civ. Dei, I. 6. c. 11.

[19] History of the Sabbath, par. 1. p. 48.

[20] See Dr. Watts's Holiness of Times, &c. p. 55.

[21] Institut. I. 2. c. 8. s. 34.

[22] Confess. Fidei. c. 5. s. 41.

[23] In Precept. 4. tom. 4. p. 670.

[24] Vid. Mill. in loc.

[25] Adv. Vigilantium Oper. tom. 2. fol. 42.

[26] Ad Magnes. p. 35.

[27] Apolog. 2. p. 98, 99.

[28] Apud Euseb. l. 4. c 23. Irenaeus, l. 5. c. 24.

[29] Stromat. l. 7. p. 744.

[30] Deut. Anima, c. 9.

[31] Homil. 5. in Esaiam, fol. 104. 3. et alibi.

[32] Ep. 33. p. 66. & Ep. 58. p. 138.

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