

DAY BY DAY

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

2.12: THE SABBATH

1. THE SABBATH A MEMORIAL OF CREATION

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.” Genesis 2:1, 2.

“After resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or set it apart, as a day of rest for man. Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God's great work of creation. And that as he should behold the evidences of God's wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.

“In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign; that they were the work of His hands, and the subjects of His authority. Thus the institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind. There was nothing in it shadowy, or of restricted application to any people.

“God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God, and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God, and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 47, 48.

“Great blessings are enfolded in the observance of the Sabbath, and God desires that the Sabbath day shall be to us a day of joy. There was joy at the institution of the Sabbath. God looked with satisfaction upon the work of His hands. All things that He had made He pronounced very good.” Genesis 1:31. Heaven and earth were filled with rejoicing. “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Job. 38:7.

“Though sin has entered the world to mar His perfect work, God still gives to us the Sabbath as a witness that One omnipotent, infinite in goodness and mercy, created all things. Our heavenly Father desires through the observance of the Sabbath to preserve among men a knowledge of Himself. He desires that the Sabbath shall direct our minds to Him as the true and living God, and that through knowing Him we may have life and peace.” Testimonies 6, 349.

“Let those who are content with morality and uprightness of conduct, and are indifferent to religious duty, be assured that there is an unearthly peace, a heavenly joy, a blessedness like that of the angels, for every one who has learned the happy secret of dwelling in the light of the divine presence.” R. W. Dale.

2. A PART OF THE TEN-COMMANDMENT LAW

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, 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.

“In the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of stone, which folded together like a book. Jesus opened them, and I saw the Ten Commandments written on them with the finger of God. On one table were four, and on the other six. The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six. But the fourth, the Sabbath commandment, shone above them all; for the Sabbath was set apart to be kept in honor of God's holy name. The holy Sabbath looked glorious—a halo of glory was all around it. I saw that the Sabbath commandment was not nailed to the cross. If it was, the other nine commandments were; and we are at liberty to break them all, as well as to break the fourth. I saw that God had not changed the Sabbath, for He never changes. But the pope had changed it from the seventh to the first day of the week; for he was to change times and laws.

“And I saw that if God had changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day, He would have changed the writing of the Sabbath commandment, written on the tables of stone, which are now in the ark in the most holy place of the temple in heaven. And it would read thus: The first day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. But I saw that it read the same as when written on the tables of stone by the finger of God, and delivered to Moses on Sinai, “But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” I saw that the holy Sabbath is, and will be, the separating wall between the true Israel of God and unbelievers; and that the Sabbath is the great question, to unite the hearts of God's dear, waiting saints.” Early Writings, 32, 33.

“Be patient, friend, and run with fortitude, The race that God before thee sets. Though tossed and harried, oft misunderstood, Remember, long continuance begets Unbending strength; And joy, at length, Will crown the labors of the true and tried, Who walked in faith beside the Crucified.

Maintain thy hope, thy confidence retain, Nor dim the trust that soon thy Lord, In loving mercy, will return again, in strange fulfillment of His word. For ripe the hour When in His power The King must stand and put a timely end, To hate and greed, that o'er this earth contend.

Gird up thy loins, to your appointed task, Lend well thy hand, and gladly run, The errands of the Lord, nor deign to ask, Wherefore, when be thy mission done. Thus will thy light be burning bright, As with the gospel of the kingdom shod, All unashamed thou waitest for thy God.” Willard Dessain.

3. A SIGN OF SANCTIFICATION

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.” Exodus 31:12-17.

“God directed that the tabernacle should be built, where the Israelites, during their wilderness journeying, could worship Him. Orders from heaven were given that this tabernacle should be built with out delay. Because of the sacredness of the work and the need for haste, some argued that the work on the tabernacle should be carried forward on the Sabbath as well as on the other days of the week. Christ heard these suggestions, and saw that the people were in great danger of being ensnared by concluding that they would be justified in working on the Sabbath that the tabernacle might be completed as quickly as possible. The word came to them, “Verily My Sabbaths you shall keep.” Though the work on the tabernacle must be forward with expedition, the Sabbath must not be employed as a working day. Even the work on the Lord's house must give way to the sacred observance of the Lord's rest day. Thus jealous is God for the honor of His memorial of creation.

“The Sabbath is a token between God and His people. It is a holy day, given by the Creator to man as a day upon which to rest, and reflect upon sacred things. God designed it to be observed through every age as a perpetual covenant. It was to be regarded as a peculiar treasure, a trust to be carefully cherished.

“As we observe the Sabbath, let us remember that it is the sign which heaven has given to man that he is accepted in the Beloved; that if he is obedient, he may enter the city of God, and partake of the fruit of the tree of life. As we refrain from labor on the seventh day, we testify to the world that we are on God's side, and are striving to live in perfect conformity to His commandments. Thus we recognize as our sovereign the God who made the world in six days and rested on the seventh.” Review and Herald, Oct. 28, 1902.

“God is love;” and ought we not to love Him who is all love to us? Can we neglect to honor and obey Him who is continually loading us with favors, and crowning us with loving-kindness and tender mercies? But God is neglected; . . . and yet His compassion is not exhausted. His love is still the same. Samuel C. Clapp.

4. HONORED BY CHRIST

“He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” Luke 4:16.

“During His childhood and youth, Jesus had worshiped among His brethren in the synagogue at Nazareth. Since the opening of His ministry He had been absent from them, but they had not been ignorant of what had befallen Him. As He again appeared among them, their interest and expectation were excited to the highest pitch. Here were the familiar forms and faces of those whom He had known from infancy. Here were His mother, His brothers and sisters, and all eyes were turned upon Him as He entered the synagogue upon the Sabbath day, and took His place among the worshipers....

“When the rabbi was present at the synagogue, he was expected to deliver the sermon, and any Israelite might give the reading from the prophets. Upon this Sabbath Jesus was requested to take part in the service.

“He “stood up to read, and there was delivered unto Him a roll of the prophet Isaiah.” The scripture which He read, was one that was understood as referring to the Messiah....

“And He closed the roll, and give it back to the attendant; . . . and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him.... And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth.”

“Jesus stood before the people as a living expositor of the prophecies concerning Himself. Explaining the words He had read, He spoke of the Messiah as a reliever of the oppressed, a liberator of captives, a

healer of the afflicted, restoring sight to the blind, and revealing to the world the light of truth. His impressive manner and the wonderful import of His words thrilled the hearers with a power they had never felt before. The tide of divine influence broke every barrier down; like Moses, they beheld the Invisible. As their hearts were moved upon by the Holy Spirit, they responded with fervent amens, and praises to the Lord.

“But when Jesus announced, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,” they were suddenly recalled to think of themselves, and of the claims of Him who had been addressing them. They, Israelites, children of Abraham, had been represented as in bondage. They had been addressed as prisoners to be delivered from the power of evil; as in darkness, and needing the light of truth. Their pride was offended, and their fears were roused. The words of Jesus indicated that His work for them was to be altogether different from what they desired.” *The Desire of Ages*, 236, 237.

5. OBSERVED BY CHRIST'S DISCIPLES

“And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.” Luke 23:56.

“Joseph owned a new tomb, hewn in a rock. This he was reserving for himself, but it was near Calvary, and he now prepared it for Jesus. The body, together with the spices brought by Nicodemus, was carefully wrapped in a linen sheet, and the Redeemer was borne to the tomb. There the three disciples straightened the mangled limbs, and folded the bruised hands upon the pulseless breast. The Galilean women came to see that all had been done that could be done for the lifeless form of their beloved Teacher. Then they saw the heavy stone rolled against the entrance of the tomb, and the Savior was left at rest. The women were last at the cross, and last at the tomb of Christ. While the evening shades were gathering, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary lingered about the resting place of their Lord, shedding tears of sorrow over the fate of Him whom they loved....

“That was a never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath to the sorrowing disciples, and also to the priests, rulers, scribes, and people. At the setting of the sun on the evening of the preparation day the trumpets sounded, signifying that the Sabbath had begun. The Passover was observed as it had been for centuries, while He to whom it pointed had been slain by wicked hands, and lay in Joseph's tomb.

“On the Sabbath the courts of the temple were filled with worshipers. The high priest from Golgotha was there, splendidly robed in his sacerdotal garments. White-turbaned priests, full of activity, performed their duties. But some present were not at rest, as the blood of bulls and goats was offered for sin. They were not conscious that type had met antitype, that an infinite sacrifice had been made for the sins of the world. They knew not that there was no further value in the performance of the ritual service. But never before had that service been witnessed with such conflicting feelings. The trumpets and musical instruments and the voices of the singers were as loud and clear as usual. But a sense of strangeness pervaded everything.

“One after another inquired about a strange event that had taken place. Hitherto the most holy place had been sacredly guarded from intrusion. But now it was open to all eyes. The heavy veil of tapestry, made of pure linen, and beautifully wrought with gold, scarlet, and purple, was rent from top to bottom....

“Nicodemus, when he saw Jesus lifted up on the cross, remembered His words spoken by night in the Mount of Olives: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” On that Sabbath, when Christ lay in the grave, Nicodemus had opportunity for reflection. A clearer light now illuminated

his mind, and the words which Jesus had spoken to him were no longer mysterious." The Desire of Ages, 773-775.

6. REVERED BY THE APOSTLE PAUL

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." Acts 17:1, 2.

"He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." Acts 18:1.

"And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words 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." Acts 13:42-44.

"For three successive Sabbaths Paul preached to the Thessalonians, reasoning with them from the Scriptures regarding the life, death, resurrection, office work, and future glory of Christ, the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." He exalted Christ, the proper understanding of whose ministry is the key that unlocks the Old Testament Scriptures, giving access to their rich treasures. . . .

"As in the places formerly entered, the apostles met with determined opposition. "The Jews which believed not" were "moved with envy." These Jews were not then in favor with the Roman power, because, not long before, they had raised an insurrection in Rome. They were looked upon with suspicion, and their liberty was in a measure restricted. They now saw an opportunity to take advantage of circumstances to reestablish themselves in favor, and at the same time to throw reproach upon the apostles and the converts to Christianity." Acts of the Apostles, 229.

God has wondrous ways in dealing, With His children here on earth,
At the time not oft revealing, All the richness of their worth.

Seldom know we, in our blindness, How all things can work for good;
But His constant loving-kindness, Will be sometime understood.

Love so large it strains the heartstrings, Broadens, deepens, while it hurts;
And though time may bring sad partings, Deeper joy to life imparts.

Hardship, trial, and temptation, Seem but hindrances in life,
Till we get a revelation, Of the fruit of toil and strife.

Even pain, which seems distressing, And so sorely hard to bear,
May become a means of blessing, If more grace we seek in prayer.

Let us cherish this conviction, Praying for discerning eyes
To discover in affliction, Heaven's blessing in disguise. Ina Botsford White.

7. OBSERVED IN THE NEW EARTH

"As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, says the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to Pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me says the Lord." Isaiah 66:22, 23.

“The Sabbath was not for Israel merely, but for the world. It had been made known to man in Eden, and, like the other precepts of the Ten Commandments, it is of imperishable obligation. Of that law of which the fourth commandment forms a part, Christ declares, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law.” So long as the heavens and the earth endure, the Sabbath will continue as a sign of the Creator's power. And when Eden shall bloom on earth again, God's holy rest day will be honored by all beneath the sun. “From one Sabbath to another” the inhabitants of the glorified new earth shall go up “to worship before Me, says the Lord.” The Desire of Ages, 283.

“In the beginning the Father and the Son had rested upon the Sabbath after their work of creation. When “the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them” (Genesis 2:1), the Creator and all heavenly beings rejoiced in contemplation of the glorious scene. “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

“Now Jesus rested from the work of redemption; and though there was grief among those who loved Him on earth, yet there was joy in heaven. Glorious to the eyes of heavenly beings was the promise of the future. A restored creation, a redeemed race, that, having conquered sin, could never fall, this, the result to flow from Christ's completed work, God and angels saw. With this scene the day upon which Jesus rested is forever linked. For “His work is perfect”; and “whatsoever God does, it shall be forever.” Deuteronomy 32:4.

“When there shall be a “restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21), the creation Sabbath, the day on which Jesus lay at rest in Joseph's tomb, will still be a (lay of rest and rejoicing. Heaven and earth will unite in praise, as “from one Sabbath to another” the nations of the saved shall bow in joyful worship to God and the Lamb.” The Desire of Ages, 769, 770.

“Sweet is the Sabbath of the Lord
To those who in His law delight;
Who love the precepts of His Word,
And tread the narrow path of right.” J. S. Thorp.

The heavenly High Priest is still as accessible to prayer and as ready to yield to His people's entreaty as when He six times conceded to Abraham's intercession. The God of Bethel is still the faithful keeper of His people. Hamilton.