

The Sabbath Question.

WHAT DAY SHALL CHRISTIANS KEEP?
THE SEVENTH OR THE FIRST?

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(Continued.)

That the Jews were under obligation to keep the seventh day, is a matter upon which all are agreed. But are Christians under obligations to observe all that was binding upon the Jews? No one, not even the Seventh Day Adventists, will answer affirmatively. If Christians are not to observe all that the Jews did, how may we decide what is binding upon them and what is not? To answer this question correctly will dispel the confusion that hangs like a mist around the question under consideration. That some things contained in the law of Moses are binding on Christians, I freely admit, but not because they are found in the law. There is another and higher source of authority to which Christians must look. At the transfiguration of the Savior, Moses and Elijah were both present—one the giver of the law, and the other the restorer of the law. The Father points to Jesus and says: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Matt. 17:5. This was doubtless intended to teach the disciples that here was one higher in authority than either Moses or Elijah. He would have a right to annul all that Moses taught, should he see fit to do so. That he had a right to annul the Sabbath law the Savior clearly intimates when he says: "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." Mark 2:28. He further indicates his right to annul whatever Moses had taught by such expressions as these: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil."

"It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, etc. But I say unto you." Notice how the Savior in the Sermon on the Mount puts his own authority against Moses, by using the expression, "But I say unto you." Now did Jesus, whose authority is above Moses, Elijah, and "them of old time," teach the abrogation of the law of Moses? That he did can be made as plain as the noon-day sun.

Before proceeding to show in what manner Jesus taught the abrogation of the law, I wish to call attention to one important fact, often overlooked, and that is, that the personal ministry of the Savior was a work of preparation. His kingdom was not set up till he had ascended to heaven and was crowned, which grand event was announced by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The law was in force till Jesus died. It was then nailed to the cross, Col. 2:14. Consequently, during the Savior's personal ministry the Sabbath law was in full force, and Jesus kept it. But this is no proof that we should keep the Sabbath now. Circumcision was observed during that time, but that does not prove that we should observe that rite. All the Jewish feasts were observed during that time. Should we therefore observe them? On one occasion Jesus healed a leper, but immediately sent him away with this instruction: "See thou say nothing to any man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priests, and offer thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Mark 1:44. Here we find that Jesus recognized the fact that the law of Moses was in force? Are we under obligation to keep what Moses commanded in case of leprosy? (See Lev. 15:3.) Certainly not. How could it be binding on the people during the personal ministry of Jesus and not on us? The law was not yet abrogated. The same kind of reasoning applies to the observance of the seventh day.

As the law was in force while the Savior was on earth, he taught his disciples to keep it, and this applied not only to the Ten Commandments, but to circumcision, the offering of sacrifices, and in short, to the whole law. As the Jewish dispensation ended with the death of the Christ, he took pains to have all things in readiness to announce the abrogation of the law, and to open the new economy. Let us now see how this was brought about.

Jesus said to Peter, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. xvi. 19. What can this binding and loosing refer to? We shall yet see that the apostles declared one dispensation closed—that was the binding—and another opened—that was the loosing. Whatsoever they bound or loosed would be recognized in heaven. They were made ambassadors of Christ, and what they announced had all the authority of the Savior himself.

When Jesus was about to be taken up from the disciples he said to the apostles: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. I want to call special attention to the latter part of the commission as quoted above. They were to teach all things whatsoever that Jesus commanded them. It made no difference what Moses may have commanded—that was not their source of authority. Christ is law-giver now, and the apostles become his ambassadors. And this shows us to whom we are to look for what we are to observe. "We are not to look to Moses, but to Christ, as he was represented by these apostles, who spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. Did they teach Christians to keep the law of Moses? If they did, then it is binding on us. But we shall see that they taught the contrary. Did they teach some things to be found in the law? They did. Was the Fourth Commandment among the things which they brought over from the law and bound on Christians? It was not. Unless it can be shown that the apostles on or after the day of Pentecost taught Christians to keep the seventh day, then it is clearly not our duty to keep it. This we shall attend to in due time; but we now turn our attention to the question, did the apostles teach the perpetuity or abrogation of the law of Moses?

The careful reader of Acts will not have failed to observe that soon after the beginning of the new dispensation this question was forced upon the attention of the apostles by certain Judaizing teachers. "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." Acts xv. 5. In order to put this question to rest, Paul and Barnabas and certain other brethren were sent up to Jerusalem, to lay this matter before the apostles and the church there. "The apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter." Acts xv. 6. The matter was fully discussed. It was decided to send a letter to the churches, which began in this wise: "The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia: forasmuch as we have heard, that certain ones who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment." This is decisive—they were not to keep the law of Moses.

Seventh Day Adventists have endeavored to evade the force of this

testimony by saying that the law of Moses was the ceremonial law, but the Ten Commandments were the law of God. They affirm that there are two laws—one the ceremonial and the other the moral law. This is all bald assumption. Where can we find this distinction of moral and ceremonial laws? The expression, law of the Lord, is applied to some of the ceremonial regulations, such as offering a pair of turtle doves. (See Luke ii. 24.) Then the expression, law of Moses, is sometimes applied to the Ten Commandments. In proof of this let us turn to Malachi iv. 4, where we read: "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." Now, what besides statutes and judgments were commanded in Horeb? Turning to Deut. iv. 13, 14, we read: "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even Ten Commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments." Thus we see that the expression, "law of Moses," is applied to the Ten Commandments. It is sometimes used in a more extended sense, so as to include the statutes and judgments. (See Luke ii. 22.) When, therefore, the brethren at Jerusalem sent a letter to all the Gentiles to the effect that they were not to be circumcised nor keep the law, they clearly announced the abrogation of the whole law, moral and ceremonial. What was not brought over into the new covenant ceased to be binding.

It is somewhat puzzling to some people to understand that the law of Moses was all abrogated. They find no trouble about the ceremonial part, but they cannot understand why the moral part should cease to be binding. This may be made plain by an illustration. Some years ago the people of Iowa adopted a new constitution. A good many things that were in the old constitution are still binding on the people of this State. It was not the intention of the people to do away with many excellent things in that constitution. And yet that old constitution has been done away in toto. Should our legislators or judges appeal to that old instrument in deciding upon the constitutionality of any law they would be laughed at. How did the framers of the new constitution proceed so as to preserve what they wished to retain from the old? They simply incorporated such things into the new. Just so it is with reference to the abrogation of the law of Moses. Many things in that law are binding yet, but not because they were in the old covenant; but because they are in the new. This running back and quoting the law of Moses as authority for Christians is absurd. We are not under that law.

Thus far I have introduced only the decision of the council of apostles and elders at Jerusalem, but I want to probe this matter still farther. When the law was given it was not intended to be perpetual, but to last only till the coming of Christ. Paul says in Gal. iii. 19: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." From verse sixteen of the same chapter we learn that the seed refers to Christ. The law then was added to the promise made to Abraham till Christ should come. The word *till* marks the limitation of the continuation of the law. The law referred to cannot mean the law of sacrifices, for that was older than the promise made to Abraham, and though incorporated into the law of Moses, could not have been said to have been added to the covenant of promise. The law having continued till Christ came, passed away. Hence, the apostle says in the same chapter: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to

Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Verses 24, 25). The people who keep the seventh day now, because it is a part of the law of Moses, are determined to be under the schoolmaster. They cannot say with Paul, "We are no longer under a schoolmaster."

The distinction between the law and the Gospel is set forth by the apostle Paul in the third chapter of 2d Corinthians. The law he styles the letter, and the gospel the spirit; one he calls the ministration of death and the other the ministration of the spirit. He says that the ministration of death was glorious, but that the ministration of the spirit was much more glorious, and then informs us that that which was glorious was done away. (Verse 11). What was done away? The answer is that it was the ministration of death, and as if to put the matter forever at rest, he says that the ministration of death was written and engraven in stones. But every Bible student knows that the Ten Commandments were written and engraven on stone, and the apostle could not have referred to anything else. Thus the command to keep the seventh day was done away, and unless it was incorporated into the gospel after the day of Pentecost, no Christian should ever keep it. Did any apostle ever quote the fourth commandment and enjoin its observance on any one after the death of Christ, at which time he nailed the law to the cross, (Col. ii. 14.) and "abolished in his flesh the enmity even of the law of commandments contained in ordinances?" Eph. ii. 15. None ever did. But this phase of the question shall receive further attention before I close.

Dr. Wm. Smith, in his Bible Dictionary, makes the following statement relative to any allusion to Sabbath keeping in the epistles: "The phenomena respecting the Sabbath, presented by the New Testament, are: 1st, the frequent reference to it in the four gospels; and 2d, the silence of the epistles, with the exception of one place (Col. ii. 16, 17), where its repeal would seem to be asserted; and perhaps one other. Heb. iv. 9. The references to it in the four gospels are numerous enough. The epistles, it must be admitted, with the exception of one place, and perhaps another to which we have already referred, are silent on the subject of the Sabbath. No rules for its observance are ever given by the apostles; its violation is never denounced by them; Sabbath breakers are never included in any list of offenders. While the first day of the week is more than once referred to as one of religious observance, it is never identified with the Sabbath."

Every careful student of the Bible knows that what is stated in the foregoing extract is strictly true. If the fourth commandment is binding on Christians, and the seventh day should now be kept, why should it be frequently mentioned in the four gospels and never be alluded to in the epistles except to indicate that it is repealed? Let it be remembered that the apostles were to teach those whom they should disciple to observe all things whatsoever that Jesus had commanded them to teach. Matt. xxviii. 20. They taught no one to keep the seventh day after receiving that commission, therefore, that day should not be kept by Christians.

It is my purpose to inquire into the teaching of church history as to the observance of the first day of the week. This I shall do for the purpose of confirmation. Church history shows that this day was kept by the primitive church in the days immediately following those in which the apostles labored, then such testimony is a strong confirmation that our interpretation of those passages refer-

ring to first day observance is correct. If we find the church immediately after the days of the apostles everywhere meeting and breaking bread on the first day of the week, the question will arise, whence came this custom? Will we not very naturally and properly turn to such passages as Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; and Rev. i. 10, and say that the custom arose from the teaching of the apostles? We could not do otherwise and deal honestly with the lessons of history.

There are two roads by which we may approach the testimony of historians on this question of first day observance. One is to begin with the early Christian fathers and trace the subject down to the present day, and the other, to begin with our standard church historians and follow the chain of evidence back to the days of the apostles. I shall choose the latter method, believing that in this way we shall have a clearer view of the entire field before us.

Mosheim, in his Ecclesiastical History, p. 27, says: "All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Savior arose from the dead; for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the church of Jerusalem, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, and was observed universally throughout the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimony of the most credible writers." Many efforts have been made by Sabbatarians to get away from the crushing weight of this testimony of Mosheim's, but all to no avail. I have lying before me a work styled "History of the Sabbath," by J. N. Andrews, a Seventh Day Adventist, in which an effort is made to array Neander, the distinguished German historian, against Mosheim. I have in my library Neander's Church History entire in five volumes, and also his *Planting and Training of the Christian Church*, and in neither of them can I find what Andrews professes to quote. That Neander cannot be arrayed against Mosheim appears evident from the following extract from his *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, Vol. I, p. 297. "The opposition to Judaism early led to the special observance of Sunday in place of the Sabbath. The first intimation of this change is in Acts xx. 7, where we find the church assembled on the first day of the week; a still later one is in Rev. i. 10, where by the Lord's day can hardly be understood the day of judgment. As the Sabbath was regarded as representing Judaism, Sunday was contemplated as a symbol of the new life consecrated to the risen Christ and grounded in his resurrection. Sunday was distinguished as a day of joy." In his *Planting and Training of the Christian Church*, a work devoted to the first century exclusively, p. 159, he says: "They rejected the Sabbath which the Jewish Christians celebrated, in order to avoid the risk of mingling Judaism and Christianity, and because another event associated more closely another day with their feelings. For, since the sufferings and resurrection of Christ appeared as the central point of Christian knowledge and practice; since his resurrection was viewed as the foundation of all Christian joy and hope, it was natural that the day which was connected with the remembrance of this event, should be specially devoted to Christian communion."

From these extracts it can be seen that when J. N. Andrews undertakes to prove from Neander that the religious observance of the first day of the week was of human origin and did not take its rise till long after the days of the apostles, he either misquotes or garbles Neander, and thereby shows that he is unreliable when he professes to quote historians. I would say to any one who reads