

THE PERPETUITY AND CHANGE OF THE SABBATH

BY JONATHAN EDWARDS

(1703-1758)

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William H. Gross www.onthewing.org April 2013

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1COR 16.1-2.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so you must do. On the first day of the week, let every one of you lay in store, as God has prospered him, so that there are no collections when I come.

WE find in the New Testament often mentioned a certain collection, which was made by the Grecian churches, for the brethren in Judea, who were reduced to pinching want by a dearth which then prevailed, and was all the heavier upon them by reason of their circumstances, having been oppressed and persecuted by the unbelieving Jews from the beginning. This collection or contribution is mentioned twice in Act 11.28-30, and 24.17. It is also noticed in several of the epistles such as Rom 15.26, and Gal 2.10. But it is most largely insisted on in these two epistles to the Corinthians; in this first epistle, chap. 16, and in the second epistle, chapters 8 and 9. The apostle begins the directions, which he delivers in this passage concerning this matter, with the words of our text in which we may observe,

1. What is to be done concerning what the apostle gives them direction — the exercise and manifestation of their charity towards their brethren by communicating to them the supply of their needs. This was often insisted on by Christ and his apostles as one main duty of the Christian religion; and it is expressly declared to be a duty by the apostle Jas 1.27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

2. We may observe the time at which the apostle directs this should be done — *namely*, "on the first day of the week." By inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he insists that it be done on a particular day of the week, as if no other day would do so well as that one, or were so proper and fitting a time for such a work. Thus, although the inspired apostle was not for making that distinction of days which the Jews made in gospel times, as appears by Gal 4.10. "You observe days, and months," etc. — yet, here he gives the preference to one day of the week before any other, for performing a certain great duty of Christianity.

3. It may be observed that the apostle had other churches that were concerned in the same duty, do it on the first day of the week: "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so you must do. On the first of the week..." From this we may learn, that it was nothing peculiar in the circumstances of the Christians at Corinth which was the reason why the Holy Ghost insisted they should perform this duty on this day of the week. The apostle had given like orders to the churches of Galatia.

¹ Edwards preached this in three separate sermons, 1730-31. They were numbered 13-15 in the 1834 edition of his works. Those were combined into a single sermon, no. 39, in the [1851 Worcester edition](#) of Edwards' *Works*, vol. 4, p.615. This is taken from that 1851 reprinted edition. – WHG

Now Galatia was far distant from Corinth; the sea parted them, and there were several other countries between them. Therefore, it cannot be thought that the Holy Ghost directs them to this time on any secular account — having respect to some particular circumstances of the people in that city — but upon a religious account. In giving the preference to this day for such work, before any other day, he has respect to something which reached all Christians throughout the wide world.

And from other passages of the New Testament, we learn that the case was the same as to other exercises of religion; and that the first day of the week was preferred before any other day,¹ in churches that were immediately under the care of the apostles, for attending to the exercises of religion in general. Act 20.7, "On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them." It seems by these things, that it was the same among the primitive Christians in the apostles' days, with respect to the first day of the week, as it was among the Jews with respect to the seventh day.

We are taught by Christ that giving alms and showing mercy are proper works for the Sabbath-day. When the Pharisees found fault with Christ for allowing his disciples to pluck the ears of corn, and eat on the Sabbath, Christ corrects them by saying, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" Mat 12.7. And Christ teaches that works of mercy are proper to be done on the Sabbath, Luk 13.15-16, and 14.5. Under the Old Testament, these works were done on sacred festivals and days of rejoicing, as in Nehemiah's and Esther's time (Neh 8.10; Est 9.19, 22). And Josephus and Philo, two very noted Jews who wrote not long after Christ's time, give an account that it was the manner among the Jews on the Sabbath, to make collections for sacred and pious uses.

DOCTRINE.

It is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be especially set apart among Christians for religious exercises and duties.

I hope by this and some other passages of the New Testament, it will plainly appear by the sequel, that this is the doctrine which the Holy Ghost intended to teach us. This is a doctrine that we have been generally brought up in by the instructions and examples of our ancestors. And it has been the general profession of the Christian world, that this day ought to be religiously observed and distinguished from other days of the week. However, some deny it. Some refuse to take notice of the day as different from other days. Others admit that it is a laudable custom of the Christian church to set apart this day for public worship, into which she fell by agreement, and by appointment of her ordinary rulers. But they deny any origin for such an observation of the day, other than prudential human appointment. Others religiously observe the Jewish Sabbath as a perpetual obligation, and say that we lack a foundation for determining that such an obligation is abrogated, and another day of the week is appointed in place of the seventh.

All these classes of men say there is no clear revelation that it is the mind and will of God that the first day of the week should be observed as a day set apart for religious exercises, in place of the ancient Sabbath; there ought to be such a revelation in order for it to be observed by the Christian church, as a divine institution. They say we should not go on the tradition of past ages, or on uncertain and far-fetched inferences from some passages of the history of the New Testament, or on some obscure and uncertain hints in the apostolic writings. Rather, we ought to

¹ 1Cor 16.1

expect a plain institution which, they say, we may conclude God would have given us if he had designed that the whole Christian church, in all ages, should observe another day of the week for a holy Sabbath, than that which was appointed of old by plain and positive institution.

So far, it is undoubtedly true that if this is the mind and will of God, then he has not left the matter to human tradition; but has so revealed his mind about it, in his word, that there is good and substantial evidence to be found that it is his mind. And doubtless, the revelation is plain enough for those who have ears to hear — that is, for those who will justly exercise their understandings about what God says to them. No Christian, therefore, should rest till he has satisfactorily discovered the mind of God in this matter. If the Christian Sabbath is of divine institution, then it is doubtless of great importance to religion, that it be well kept — and therefore, that every Christian be well acquainted with the institution.

If men take it only on trust, and keep the first day of the week because their parents taught them to do so, or because they see others do it, then they will never be likely to keep it as conscientiously and strictly as if they had been convinced by seeing for themselves, that there are good grounds in the word of God for their practice. Unless they see this for themselves, whenever they are negligent in sanctifying the Sabbath, or are guilty of profaning it, their consciences will not have that advantage to strike them for it, as they otherwise would. And those who have a sincere desire to obey God in all things, will keep the Sabbath more carefully and more cheerfully if they have seen and been convinced that they are doing what is according to the will and command of God, and what is acceptable to him; and they will also have a great deal more comfort in reflecting on their having carefully and painfully kept the Sabbath.

Therefore, I design now, by the help of God, to show that it is sufficiently revealed in the Scriptures, that it is the mind and will of God that the first day of the week should be distinguished in the Christian church from other days of the week, as a Sabbath, to be devoted to religious exercises.

In order to do this, I will premise here that the mind and will of God, concerning any duty to be performed by us, may be sufficiently revealed in his word, without having a particular precept enjoining it, in so many express terms. The human understanding is the ear to which the word of God is spoken; and if it is so spoken that that ear may plainly hear it, then it is enough. God is sovereign as to the manner of speaking his mind, whether he speaks it in express terms, or whether he speaks it by saying several other things which imply it, and from which we may plainly perceive it by comparing them together. If the mind of God is but revealed, if there are but sufficient means for communicating his mind to our minds, then that is sufficient — whether we hear so many express words with our ears, or see them in writing with our eyes; or whether by the eye of reason and understanding, we see the thing that he would signify to us.

Who can positively say, that if it had been the mind of God, that we should keep the first day of the week, he would have commanded it in express terms, as he did the observation of the seventh day of old? Indeed, if God had made our faculties such that we were not capable of receiving a revelation of his mind in any other way; then there would have been some reason to say so. But God has given us such understandings, that we are capable of receiving a revelation, when it is made in another manner. And if God deals with us agreeably to our natures, and in a way that is suitable to our capacities, then it is enough. If God reveals his mind in any way whatsoever, provided it is according to our faculties, we are obliged to obedience; and God may expect our

notice and observance of his revelation, in the same manner as if he had revealed it in express terms.

I will speak on this subject under these two general propositions.

1. It is sufficiently clear that it is the mind of God, that one day of the week should be devoted to rest and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations.
2. It is sufficiently clear that under the gospel-dispensation, this day is the first day of the week.

I. Proposition. It is sufficiently clear that it is the mind of God that one day of the week should be devoted to rest and to religious exercises, throughout all ages and nations; and not only among the ancient Israelites till Christ came, but even in these gospel times, and among all nations professing Christianity.

1. From the consideration of the nature and state of mankind in this world, it is most consonant to human reason, that certain fixed parts of time should be set apart, to be spent by the church wholly in religious exercises, and in the duties of divine worship. It is a duty incumbent on all mankind, in all ages alike, to worship and serve God. His service should be our great business. It becomes us to worship him with the greatest devotion and engagedness of mind — and therefore to put ourselves, at proper times, in those circumstances which will most contribute to render our minds entirely devoted to this work, without being diverted or interrupted by other things.

The state of mankind in this world is such that we are called to concern ourselves in secular business and affairs, which will necessarily, in a considerable degree, take up the thoughts and engage the attention of the mind. However, some particular persons may be in circumstances that are more free and disengaged; yet the state of mankind is such that the bulk of them, in all ages and nations, are called ordinarily to exercise their thoughts about secular affairs, and to follow worldly business which, in its own nature, is remote from the solemn duties of religion.

It is therefore most fitting and suitable that certain times should be set apart, on which men should be required to toss aside all other concerns, so that their minds may be more freely and entirely engaged in spiritual exercises, in the duties of religion, and in the immediate worship of God; and that their minds being disengaged from common concerns, their religion may not be mixed with them.

It is also suitable that these times should be fixed and settled, so that the church may agree in it, and that they should be the same for all, so that men may not interrupt one another, but may rather assist one another by mutual example — for example has a great influence in such cases. If there is a time set apart for public rejoicing, and there is a general manifestation of joy, the general example seems to inspire men with a spirit of joy — one kindles another. So, if it is a time of mourning, and there are general appearances and manifestations of sorrow, it naturally affects the mind, disposes it to depression, casts a gloom upon it, and (as it were) dulls and deadens the spirits. So too, if a certain time is set apart as holy time for general devotion, and for solemn religious exercises, a general example tends to render the spirit serious and solemn.

2. Without doubt, one proportion of time is better and fitter than another for this purpose. One proportion is more suitable to the state of mankind, and will have a greater tendency to answer the ends of such times, than another. The times may be too far apart; I think human reason is sufficient to discover that it would be too seldom for the purposes of such solemn times, if they were but once a year. So I conclude, and nobody will deny, that some times may be too near together to agree with the state and necessary affairs of mankind.

Therefore, there can be no difficulty in allowing that some certain proportion of time, whether we can exactly discover it or not, is really fittest and best. And considering all things — considering the end for which such times are kept, and the condition, circumstances, and necessary affairs of men, and considering what the state of man is, taking one age and nation with another — allowing that one proportion of time is more convenient and suitable than any other. This God may know and exactly determine, though we cannot, by reason of the scantiness of our understandings.

Just as a certain frequency of the returns of these times may be more suitable than any other, so one length or continuance of times may be fitter than another, to answer the purposes of such times. If such times, when they come, were to last but an hour, it would not well answer the end. For then worldly things would crowd too nearly upon sacred exercises, and there would not be that opportunity to get the mind so thoroughly free and disengaged from other things, as there would be if the times were longer. Being so short, sacred and profane things would be mixed together, as it were.

Therefore, a certain distance between these times, and a certain continuance of them when they come, is more proper than others; this God knows and is able to determine, though perhaps we cannot.

3. It is unreasonable to suppose any other than this: that God's working six days and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it, was to be of general use in determining this matter; and it is written so that the practice of mankind in general might, in some way or other, be regulated by it. What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day, and hallowing and blessing it, *before* giving the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to *himself*, so that within himself he might observe it: that is most absurd. And it is unreasonable to suppose that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which arose over two thousand years later.

Therefore, so much must be intended by it, that it was God's mind that mankind, following his example, should work six days and then rest, and hallow or sanctify the next day — and that they should sanctify *every* seventh day; or that the space between rest and rest should be six days among his creatures here on earth, one hallowed time and then another. So that it appears from this, that it is the mind and will of God that not only the Jews, but men in all nations and ages, should sanctify one day in seven: *this* is the thing we are endeavouring to prove.

4. The mind of God in this matter is clearly revealed in the fourth commandment. The will of God is revealed there, not only that the Israelite nation, but that all nations, should keep every seventh day holy; or (which is the same thing) one day after every sixth. This commandment, as well as the rest, is doubtless everlasting and of perpetual obligation, at least, as to its substance. This is intimated by its being engraved on the tablets of stone. Nor is it to be thought that Christ ever abolished *any* commandment of the ten; but that there is still the complete number ten, and there will be to the end of the world.

Some say, that the fourth commandment is perpetual, but not in its literal sense; not as designing any particular proportion of time to be set apart and devoted to literal rest and religious exercises.

They say, that it stands in force only in a mystical sense — namely, as that weekly rest of the Jews typified spiritual rest in the Christian church; and that under the gospel we are not to make

any distinction of one day from another, but are to keep all our time holy, doing everything in a spiritual manner.

But this is an absurd way of interpreting the commandment as it refers to Christians. For if the commandment is that far abolished, then it is entirely abolished. For it is the very design of the commandment, to fix the time of worship. The first commandment fixes the object, the second the means, the third the manner, the fourth the time. And if it now stands in force only as signifying a spiritual Christian rest, and holy behaviour at all times, then it does not remain as one of the Ten Commandments, but as a summary of all the commandments.

The main objection against the perpetuity of this commandment is that the duty required is not moral. Those laws whose obligation arises from the nature of things, and from the general state and nature of mankind, as well as from God's positive revealed will, are called *moral laws*. Others, whose obligation depends merely on God's positive and arbitrary institution, are not moral; such as the ceremonial laws, and the precepts of the gospel about the two sacraments.

Now, the objectors say that they will allow all that is moral in the Decalogue to be of perpetual obligation; but this commandment, they say, is not moral.

But this objection is weak and insufficient for the purpose for which it is brought, or to prove that the fourth commandment, as to its substance, is not a perpetual obligation. For,

(1.) If it were allowed that no morality belongs to the commandment, and that the duty required is founded merely on an arbitrary institution, it cannot therefore be concluded with certainty that the commandment is not perpetual. We know that there may be commands in force under the gospel, and to the end of the world, which are not moral: such are the institutions of the two sacraments.

Why may there not be positive commands in force in all ages of the church? If positive, arbitrary institutions are in force in gospel-times, then what is there to conclude that no positive precept given *before* the times of the gospel, can still continue in force? But,

(2.) As we observed already, the thing in general — that there should be certain fixed times set apart to be devoted to religious exercises — is founded in the fitness of the thing, arising from the nature of things, and the nature and universal state of mankind. Therefore, there is as much reason that there be a command of perpetual and universal obligation about this, as there is about any other duty. For if the thing in general — that there be a time fixed — is founded in the nature of things, then there is a consequent necessity that the time be *limited* by a command; for there must be a proportion of time fixed, or else the general moral duty cannot be observed.

(3.) The particular determination of the proportion of time in the fourth commandment, is also founded in the nature of things — only, our understandings are not sufficient absolutely to determine it of themselves. We observed already that without a doubt, one proportion of time, in itself, is fitter than another; and that a certain continuance of time is fitter than any other, considering the universal state and nature of mankind — this God may see, even though our understandings are not perfect enough absolutely to determine it. So the difference between this command and others, does not lie in this: that other commands are founded in the fitness of the things themselves, arising from the universal state and nature of mankind, and this one is not. Rather, it is only that the fitness of other commands is more obvious to the understandings

of men, and they might have seen it of themselves; but this one could not be precisely discovered and positively determined without the assistance of revelation.

So the commandment of God, that every seventh day should be devoted to religious exercises, is founded in the universal state and nature of mankind, as well as other commands. It is only that man's reason is not sufficient, without divine direction, to exactly determine it. Though perhaps man's reason is sufficient to determine that it should not be more seldom, nor more often, than once in seven days.

5. God appears in his word to lay abundantly more weight on this precept concerning the Sabbath, than on any precept of the ceremonial law. It is in the *Decalogue*, one of the Ten Commandments which were delivered by God with an audible voice; it was written with his own finger on the tablets of stone in the mount; and it was appointed afterwards to be written on the tablets which Moses made.

Keeping the weekly Sabbath is spoken of by the prophets, as that in which consists a great part or holiness of life; and it is inserted among our *moral* duties,

Isa 58.13-14. "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,¹ from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and will honour him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: then you will delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."

6. It is foretold that this commandment would be observed in gospel-times; as in Isaiah 56 at the beginning, where the due observance of the Sabbath is spoken of as a great part of holiness of life, and is placed among our moral duties.² It is also mentioned as a duty that would be most acceptable to God from his people, even where the prophet is speaking of gospel-times; as in the foregoing chapter, and in the first verse of this chapter. And, in the third and fourth verses, the prophet is speaking of the abolition of the ceremonial law in gospel-times, and particularly of that law, which forbids eunuchs to come into the congregation of the Lord. Yet, here the man is pronounced blessed, who keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, verse 2. And even in the very sentence where the eunuchs are spoken of as being free from the ceremonial law, they are spoken of as still being under an obligation to keep the Sabbath, and actually keeping it, as that which God lays great weight upon:

"For thus says the Lord, to the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even to them I will give in my house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off," Isa. 56.4.

Besides, the strangers spoken of in the 6th and 7th verses, are the Gentiles who would be called in the times of the gospel, which is evident from the last clause in the 7th verse, and by the 8th verse:

¹ From walking and working on that day; or withdraw your mind and affections from all worldly things – J. Gill.

² **Isa 56:1** Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, For My salvation *is* about to come, And My righteousness to be revealed. ² Blessed *is* the man *who* does this, And the son of man *who* lays hold on it; Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil."

"For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those who are gathered to him."

Yet it is represented here as their duty to keep the Sabbath:

"Also the sons of the stranger, who join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one who keeps the Sabbath, from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant; even them I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer," Isa 56.6.

7. We have a further argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, in Mat 24.20: "Pray that your flight is not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath-day." Christ is here speaking of the flight of the apostles and other Christians out of Jerusalem and Judea, just before their final destruction, which is manifest by the whole context, and especially by the 16th verse: "Then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains." But this final destruction of Jerusalem was *after* the dissolution of the Jewish constitution, and *after* the Christian dispensation was fully set up. Yet, it is plainly implied in these words of our Lord, that even then, Christians were bound to a strict observation of the Sabbath.

Thus I have shown that it is the will of God that every seventh day be devoted to rest and to religious exercises.

I proposed to discuss this doctrine under two propositions; and having already endeavoured to prove under the first, that one day of the week is, throughout all ages, to be devoted to religious exercises; I now proceed to the second.

II. Proposition. It is the will of God, that under the gospel dispensation, or in the Christian church, this day should be the *first* day of the week.

In order to confirm this, let the following things be considered.

1. The words of the fourth commandment afford no more objection to this being the Sabbath day, than to any other day. It is no more opposite to any sentence or word of the fourth commandment that this day, which (according to Jewish reckoning) is the first of the week, should be kept as a Sabbath, rather than the seventh day of the week be kept as a Sabbath. The words of the fourth commandment do not determine which day of the week we should keep as a Sabbath; they merely determine that we should rest and keep every seventh day as a Sabbath, or one day after every six. It says, "Six days you shall labour, and the seventh you shall rest; which implies no more than this: after six days of labour, we shall, on the next day to the sixth, rest and keep it holy. And we are obliged to do this forever. But the words in no way determine where those six days begin, and thus where the day of rest or the Sabbath shall fall. There is no direction in the fourth commandment how to reckon the time, *i.e.* where to begin and end it; but that is supposed to be determined some other way.

The Jews did not know, by the fourth commandment, where to begin their six days, and on which particular day to rest; this was determined by another precept. The fourth commandment does indeed suppose a particular day is appointed; but it does not appoint any. It requires us to rest and keep holy a seventh day, one after every six of labour, which particular day God either had appointed or would appoint. The particular day was determined for that nation in another place — *namely*, in Exo 16.23, 25, 26.

"And he said to them, this is what the Lord has said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord: bake what you will bake, today, and boil what you will boil; and what remains, lay up for yourselves, to be kept until the morning. And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a Sabbath to the Lord: today you shall not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there shall be none in it."

This is the first place where we have any mention made of the Sabbath, since the first Sabbath on which God rested.

It seems that the Israelites, in the time of their bondage in Egypt, had lost the true reckoning of time by the days of the week, reckoning from the first day of the creation. They were slaves, and in cruel bondage, and had in great measure forgotten the true religion: for we are told, that they served the gods of Egypt.

And it is not to be supposed that the Egyptians would allow their slaves to rest from their work every seventh day. Now, having remained in bondage for so long a time, they had probably lost the weekly reckoning; therefore, when God brought them out of Egypt into the wilderness, he made known to them the Sabbath, on the occasion and in the manner recorded in the text just now quoted. Hence, we read in Nehemiah that when God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, etc. he made known to them his holy Sabbath; Neh 9.14. "And made known to them your holy Sabbath." To the same effect, we read in Eze 20.10, 12. "Therefore I caused them to go out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. Moreover, I also gave them my Sabbaths."

But they never would have known where the particular day would have fallen by the fourth commandment. Indeed, the fourth commandment, as it was spoken to the Jews, referred to their Jewish Sabbath. But that does not prove that the day was determined and appointed by it. The precept in the fourth commandment is to be taken generally about such a seventh day as God would appoint, or had appointed. And because such a particular day had already been appointed for the Jewish church, as it was spoken to them, it therefore referred to that particular day. But this proves only that the same words refer to another appointed seventh day, now in the Christian church. The words of the fourth commandment may oblige the church, under different dispensations, to observe different appointed seventh days, just as the fifth commandment may oblige different persons to honour different fathers and mothers.

The Christian Sabbath, in the sense of the fourth commandment, is as much the seventh day, as the Jewish Sabbath, because it is kept after six days of labour as well as that. It is the seventh, reckoning from the beginning of our first working-day, as well as that was the seventh from the beginning of their first working day. All the difference is that the seven days formerly began from the day after God's rest from the creation; and now they begin the day after that. It is no matter by what names the days are called: if our nation had, for instance, called Wednesday the first of the week, it would all have been the same, as to this argument.

Therefore, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath, there is no change from the fourth commandment; rather, the change is from another law, which determined the beginning and ending of their working days. So that those words of the fourth commandment — *namely*, "Six days shall you labour and do all your work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God;" ¹ — afford no objection against what is called the Christian Sabbath, for these words remain in full force. Nor does any just objection arise from the words following it — *namely*,

¹ Deut. 5.13, 14.

"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it." ¹ These words are not made insignificant to Christians, by the institution of the Christian Sabbath. They still remain in their full force as to what is principally intended by them.

They were designed to give us a reason why we are to work only six days at a time, and then rest on the seventh: it is because God has set us the example. And taken so, they still remain in as much force as they ever were. This is still the reason, as much as it ever was, why we may work only six days at a time. What is the reason that Christians rest every seventh, and not every eighth, or every ninth, or tenth day? It is because God worked six days and rested the seventh.

It is true that these words carried something further in their meaning, as they were spoken to the Jews and to the church before the coming of Christ. It was then also intended that the seventh day was to be kept in commemoration of the work of creation. But this is no objection to the supposition that the words, as they relate to us, do not import all that they did, as they related to the Jews. For there are other words which were written on those tablets of stone with the Ten Commandments, which are known and admitted not to have the same import, as they relate to us, and as they related to the Jews, — *namely*, these words, in the preface to the Ten Commandments: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." — These words were written on the tablets of stone with the rest, and they are spoken to us as well as to the Jews. They are spoken to all to whom the commandments themselves are spoken; for they are spoken as an enforcement of the commandments. But they do not now remain in all the meaning which they had then, as they respected the Jews. For we were never brought out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, except in a *mystical* sense. The same may be said of those words which are inserted in the commandments themselves,

"And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out from there, through a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath-day," Deu 5.15.

So that all the arguments of those who are against the Christian Sabbath, drawn from the fourth commandment (which are all their strength), come to nothing.

2. That the ancient church was commanded to keep a seventh day in commemoration of the work of creation, is an argument for keeping a weekly Sabbath in commemoration of the work of redemption, and not a reason against it.

We read in Scripture of *two* creations, the old and the new. And these words of the fourth commandment are to be taken with the same force by those who belong to the new creation, and with respect to that new creation, as they were by those who belonged to the old creation, with respect to that.

We read that, "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and the church of old was to commemorate that work. But when God creates a new heaven and a new earth, those who belong to this new heaven and new earth, by like reasoning, are to commemorate the creation of *their* heaven and earth.

The Scriptures teach us to look at the old creation as destroyed, and as it were, annihilated by sin; or as being reduced to chaos again, without form and void, as it was at first: Jer 4.22-23, "They

¹ Exod. 20.11.

are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void: and beheld the heavens, and they had no light!" — *i.e.* they were reduced to the same state in which they were at first; the earth was without form and void, and there was no light, but darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The Scriptures further teach us to call the gospel restoration and redemption, a creation of a new heaven and a new earth: Isa 65.17-18, "For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." And Isa 51.16, "And I have put my words in your mouth, and have covered you in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion, you are my people." And Isa 66.22. "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make," etc. — In these places we are not only told of a new creation, or new heavens and a new earth, but we are told what is meant by it — *namely*, the gospel renovation, making Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; saying to Zion, "You are my people," etc. The prophet, in all these places, is prophesying of the gospel-redemption.

The gospel state is everywhere spoken of as a renewed state of things, in which old things have passed away, and all things have become new. We are said to be created in Christ Jesus for good works: all things are restored and reconciled whether in heaven or in earth, and God has caused light to shine out of darkness, as he did at the beginning. And the dissolution of the Jewish state was often spoken of in the Old Testament as the end of the world. But we who belong to the gospel church, belong to the new creation. And therefore there seems to be at least as much reason for us to commemorate the work of this creation, as for the members of the ancient Jewish church to commemorate the work of the old creation.

3. There is another thing which confirms that the fourth commandment teaches God's resting from the new creation, as well as from the old. The Scriptures expressly speak of the one, as parallel with the other — *i.e.* Christ's resting from the work of redemption is expressly spoken of as being parallel with God's resting from the work of creation, as in Heb 4.10, "For he that has entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his."

Now, Christ rested from his works when he rose from the dead, on the first day of the week. When he rose from the dead, *then* he finished his work of redemption; his humiliation was then at an end; he then rested, and was refreshed. When it is said, verse 9, "There remains a rest for the people of God;" in the original, it is a *Sabbatism*,¹ or keeping a Sabbath. And this reason is given for it: "For he that entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from his." These three things at least, we are taught by these words:

(1.) We are taught by them to look upon Christ's rest from his work of redemption, as parallel with God's rest from the work of creation; for they are expressly compared together, as parallel to one another.

(2.) They are spoken of as parallel, particularly in this respect — *namely*, the relation which they both have to keeping a Sabbath among God's people, or with respect to the influence which these two rests have, as to Sabbatizing in the church of God: for it is expressly with respect to this that they are compared together. Here is an evident reference to God's blessing and hallowing the day of his rest from the creation, as being a Sabbath, and of his appointing a

¹ **Heb 4:9** σαββατισμὸς *sabbatismos* [NT:4520].

Sabbath of rest in imitation of him. For the apostle is speaking of this in Heb 4.4, "For he spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, 'And God rested the seventh day from all his works.'" Thus far is evident, whatever the apostle has respect to by this keeping of a Sabbath by the people of God — whether it is a weekly Sabbatizing on earth, or a Sabbatizing in heaven.

(3.) It is evident in these words, that the preference is given to the latter rest — *namely*, to the rest of our Saviour from his works, with respect to the influence it should have, or the relation it bears, to the Sabbatizing of the people of God, now under the gospel. This is evidently implied in the expression, "There remains therefore a Sabbatism to the people of God. For he that entered into his rest," etc. For in this expression, "There remains," it is intimated that the old Sabbatism appointed in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, does not remain, but ceases; and that this new rest, in commemoration of Christ's resting from his works, remains in its place.

4. The Holy Ghost has implicitly told us that the Sabbath instituted in commemoration of the old creation, should not be kept in gospel-times, Isa 65.17-18.¹ There we are told that when God would create new heavens and a new earth, the former would not be remembered, nor come to mind. If this is so, then it is not to be supposed that we are to keep a seventh part of time to remember it on purpose, and call it to mind.

Let us understand this whichever way we will, it will not be very consistent with keeping one day in seven in the gospel-church, principally for remembering and calling to mind the old creation. If the meaning of the place is only this:

- that the old creation will not be remembered or come to mind in comparison with the new;
- that the new will be so much more remarkable and glorious;
- that it will so much more nearly concern us;
- that so much more notice will be taken of it;
- that it will be thought so much more worthy to be remembered and commemorated, that the other will not be remembered nor come to mind;

then it is impossible that the Sabbath should be more to *our* purpose. For then the Holy Ghost hereby teaches us that the Christian church has much more reason to commemorate the new creation than the old — so much so, that the old is worthy to be forgotten in comparison with it.

As the old creation was no more to be remembered, nor come to mind, so in the next verse, the church is directed to forever commemorate the new creation: "But be glad, and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy;" *i.e.* though you forget the old, yet forever to the end of the world, keep a remembrance of the new creation.

5. It is an argument that the Jewish Sabbath was not to be perpetual, that the Jews were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt. One reason why it was instituted, is because God thus delivered them, as we are expressly told:

¹ [Isa 65:17](#) "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing, And her people a joy.

"And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out from there, through a mighty hand, and by an out stretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath-day," Deu 5.15.

Now, can any person think that God would have all nations under the gospel, to the end of the world, keep a day every week, which was instituted in remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt.

6. The Holy Ghost has implicitly told us that instituted memorials of the Jews' deliverance from Egypt should no longer be upheld in gospel-times. The Holy Ghost, speaking of gospel-times, says,

"Therefore, behold the days are coming, says the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord lives that brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt; but the Lord lives that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands where he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their own land," Jer 16.14-15.

"They will no more say, The Lord lives that *brought, etc.*" — *i.e.* at least they will no longer keep any public memorials of it.

If there is a Sabbath kept in gospel-times, as we have shown there must be, then it is more just to suppose from these words, that it would be as a memorial of what is spoken of in the latter verse, bringing the children of Israel up from the land of the north — that is, the redemption of Christ, and his bringing home the elect not only from Judea, but from the north, and from all quarters of the world. See Isa 43.16-20.¹

7. It is no more than just, to suppose that God intended to intimate to us that the Sabbath ought to be kept by Christians in commemoration of Christ's redemption. This is because the Israelites were commanded to keep it in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt; and that was an evident, known, and allowed type of Christ's redemption. It was ordered by God to represent it, on purpose; everything about that deliverance was typical of this redemption, and much is made of it, principally for this reason: because it is so remarkable a type of Christ's redemption. And their deliverance was but a shadow; the work in itself was nothing in comparison with the work of redemption. What is a petty redemption of one nation from a temporal bondage, compared to the eternal salvation of the whole church of the elect in all ages and nations, from eternal damnation; and introducing them not into a temporal Canaan, but into heaven, into eternal glory and blessedness? Was that shadow so much to be commemorated, that one day a week was to be kept on account of it; and yet, shall we not much more commemorate that great and glorious work which it was designed on purpose to be a shadow of?

Besides, the words in the fourth commandment, which speak of their deliverance out of Egypt, can be of no significance to us, unless they are to be interpreted of the gospel-redemption — but the words of the Decalogue are spoken to *all* nations and ages. Therefore, as the words were spoken to the Jews, they referred to the type or shadow; and as they are spoken to us, they are to

¹ **Isa 43:16** Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea And a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ Who brings forth the chariot and horse, The army and the power (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick): ¹⁸ "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness *And* rivers in the desert. ²⁰ The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness *And* rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen.

be interpreted of the antitype and substance. For the Egypt from which we are redeemed under the gospel, is the *spiritual* Egypt; the house of bondage from which we are redeemed, is a state of *spiritual* bondage. Therefore, the words, as spoken to us, are to be interpreted thus: Remember, you were a slave to sin and Satan, and the Lord your God delivered you from this bondage, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath-day.

The words in the preface to the Ten Commandments, about bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, are interpreted in our catechism — and as they have respect to us — must be interpreted of our spiritual redemption. And so, by an exact identity of reason, these words in Deuteronomy, annexed to the fourth commandment, must be interpreted of the same gospel-redemption.

The Jewish Sabbath was kept on the day that the children of Israel came up out of the Red Sea. For we are told in Deu 5.15, that this holy rest of the Sabbath was appointed in commemoration of their coming up out of Egypt. But the day of their going through the Red Sea was the day of their coming up out of Egypt; for till then, they were in the land of Egypt.

The Red Sea was the boundary of the land of Egypt. The Scripture itself tells us that the day on which they sang the song of Moses, was the day of their coming up out of the land of Egypt. Hos 2.15, "And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." This plainly refers to that triumphant song which Moses and the children of Israel sang when they came up out of the Red Sea.

The Scripture tells us that God appointed the Jewish Sabbath in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel from their task-masters, the Egyptians, and of their rest from their hard bondage and slavery under them:

"That your man-servant and your maid-servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out from there, through a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to Keep the Sabbath-day," Deu 5.14-15.

But the day that the children of Israel were delivered from their task-masters and had rest from them, was the day when they came up out of the Red Sea. They had no rest from the Egyptians until then. For although they had begun their journey to go out of the land of Egypt, they were pursued by the Egyptians, and they were exceedingly perplexed and distressed. But on the morning that they came up out of the Red Sea, they had complete and final deliverance; *then* they had full rest from their task-masters. And then God said to them, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever," Exo 14.13. Then they enjoyed a joyful day of rest, a day of refreshment. Then they sang the song of Moses; and on *that* day was their Sabbath of rest.

But the children of Israel coming up out of the Red Sea, was only a type of the resurrection of Christ. That people was the mystical body of Christ, and Moses was a great type of Christ himself. And besides, on that day Christ went before the children of Israel in the pillar of cloud and of fire, as their Saviour and Redeemer. On that morning Christ, in this pillar of cloud and fire, rose out of the Red Sea, as out of great waters; which was a type of Christ's rising from a state of death, and from that great humiliation which he suffered in death.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is represented in Scripture by his coming up out of deep waters. So it is in Christ's resurrection, as represented by Jonah's coming out of the sea, Mat 12.40. It is also compared to a deliverance out of deep waters, Psa 69.1-3, and 14-15. These things are spoken of Christ, which is evident from this: that many things in this Psalm are applied to Christ expressly in the New Testament.¹ Therefore, as the Jewish Sabbath was appointed on the day on which the pillar of cloud and fire rose out of the Red Sea, and on which Moses and the church (the mystical body of Christ) came up out of the same sea (which is a type of the resurrection of Christ), it is a great confirmation that the Christian Sabbath should be kept on the day of the rising of the real body of Christ from the grave, which is the antitype. For surely the Scriptures have taught us that the type should give way to the antitype, and the shadow should give way to the substance.

8. I argue the same thing from Psa 118.22-24. There we are taught, that the day of Christ's resurrection is to be celebrated with holy joy by the church.

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner.² This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

The stone spoken of is Christ; he was refused and rejected by the builders, especially when he was put to death. Making him the head of the corner — which is the Lord's doing, and so marvellous in our eyes — is Christ's exaltation, which began with his resurrection. While Christ lay in the grave, he lay as a stone cast away by the builders. But when God raised him from the dead, he became the head of the corner. This is evident from the apostle's interpretation in Acts 4.10-11: "Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead," etc. "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the head of the corner." And the day on which this was done, we are taught here, God has made the day of rejoicing for the church.

9. The abolition of the Jewish Sabbath seems to be intimated by this: that Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, lay buried on that day. Christ, the author of the world, was the author of that work of creation of which the Jewish Sabbath was the memorial. It was he that worked six days and rested the seventh day from all his works,³ and was refreshed. Yet he was held in the chains of death on that day. God, who created the world, now in his second work of creation, did not follow his own example, if I may speak this way. Christ remained imprisoned in the grave on that day, and he took another day to rest in.⁴

The Sabbath was a day of rejoicing; for it was kept in commemoration of God's glorious and gracious works of creation and the redemption out of Egypt. Therefore, we are directed to call the Sabbath a delight. But it is not a proper day for the church to rejoice — Christ's spouse — when Christ the bridegroom lies buried in the grave, as Christ says, Mat 9.15. "The children of the bride-chamber cannot mourn, while the bridegroom is with them. But the time will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them; then shall they mourn." While Christ was held

¹ Compare verse 4 with Joh 15.25; and verse 9 with Joh 2.17; and verse 2 with Mat 27.34, 48, Mar 15.23, Joh 19.29; and verse 2 with Rom 11.9-10; and verse 25 with Acts 1.20.

² Or "the chief cornerstone."

³ **Joh 1:3** All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

⁴ That is, Christ arose on the third day, not the next day.

under the chains of death, then the bridegroom was taken from them; then it was a proper time for the spouse to mourn and not rejoice. But when Christ rose again, then it was a day of joy, because we are born again to a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.¹

10. Christ has evidently, on purpose and by design, peculiarly honoured the first day of the week, the day on which he rose from the dead; for he took this day, from time to time, to appear to the apostles.² and he chose this day to pour out the Holy Ghost on the apostles, which we read of in the second chapter of Acts. For this was on Pentecost, which was on the first day of the week, as you may see by Lev 23.15-16. And he honoured this day by pouring out his Spirit on the apostle John, and giving him his visions, Rev 1.10. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," etc. Now doubtless Christ had his meaning in thus honouring and distinguishing this day.

11. It is evident by the New Testament, that this was especially the day of the public worship of the primitive church, by the direction of the apostles. We are told that this was the day that they customarily came together to break bread. And they evidently did this with the approval of the apostles, since they preached to them on that day; and therefore doubtless they assembled together by the direction of the apostles. Act 20.7. "And on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them." So the Holy Ghost was careful that the public contributions would be on this day, in all the churches, rather than on any other day, as appears by our text.

12. This first day of the week in the New Testament is called *the Lord's day*; see Rev 1.10. Some say, how do we know that this was the first day of the week? *Every day is the Lord's day*. But it is the design of John to tell us when he had those visions. And if the Lord's day meant *any day*, how does that inform us when that event took place?

But we know what is meant by this expression, in the same way as we know what the meaning is of any word in the original of the New Testament, or the meaning of any expression in an ancient language — *namely*, by what we find to be the universal signification of the expression in ancient times. This expression, *THE Lord's day*, is found — by the ancient use of the whole Christian church, and by what appears in all the writings of ancient times, even from the apostles' days — to signify the first day of the week.

And the expression implies in it the holiness of the day. For doubtless the day is called the Lord's day, just as the sacred supper is called the Lord's supper — so called because it is a *holy* supper, to be celebrated in remembrance of the Lord Christ, and of his redemption. So too, this is a holy day, because it is to be kept in remembrance of the Lord Christ, and his redemption.

The first day of the week being called "the Lord's day" in Scripture, sufficiently makes it out to be the day of the week that is to be kept holy to God; for God has been pleased to call it by his own name. When anything is called by the name of God in Scripture, it denotes the appropriation of it to God. Thus God put his name on his people Israel of old; Numbers 6.27. "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel." They were called by the name of God, as it is said in 2Chr 7.14, "If my people who are called by my name," etc. — *i.e.* They were called God's

¹ 1Pet 1.3.

² *e.g.*, **Joh 20:19** Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." **Joh 20:26** Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

people, or the Lord's people. This denoted that they were a holy, special people above all others. Deu 7.6. "You are a holy people to the Lord;" and so it is in verse 14, and many other places.

So the city Jerusalem was called by God's name; Jer 25.29, "Upon the city which is called by my name." Dan 9.18-19, "And the city which is called by Your name," etc. This denoted that it was a holy city, a city chosen by God above all other cities for holy uses, and it is often called the holy city, as in Neh 11.1. "To dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city;" and in many other places.

So the temple is said to be a house called by God's name; 1Kng 8.43, "This house that is called by my name." And often elsewhere. That is, it was called God's house, or the Lord's house. This denoted that it was called *a holy place*, a house devoted to holy uses, above all others.

So also we find that the first day of the week is called by God's name, being called in Scripture God's day, or the Lord's day, which denotes that it is a holy day, a day appropriated to holy uses, above all other days in the week.

13. The tradition of the church from age to age, though not rule, may be a great confirmation of the truth in such a case as this is. We find by all accounts that it has been the universal custom of the Christian church, in all ages, even from the age of the apostles, to keep the first day of the week. We read in the writings which remain of the first, second, and third centuries, of the Christians keeping the Lord's day; and so too in all succeeding ages; and there are no accounts that contradict them. This day has been kept all along by Christians, in all countries throughout the world, and by almost all that have borne the name of Christians, of all denominations, however different in their opinions as to other things.

Now, although this is not sufficient of itself without a foundation in Scripture, it may be a confirmation of it, because there is really a matter of conviction in it to our reason. Reason may greatly confirm truths revealed in the Scriptures. The universality of the custom throughout all Christian countries, in all ages, by what account we have of them, is a good argument that the church had it from the apostles. And it is difficult to conceive how else all would come to agree to set up such a custom through the world, of different sects and opinions — and we have no account of any such thing.

14. It in no way weakens these arguments, that there is nothing more plainly said about it in the New Testament till John wrote his *Revelation* — because there is a sufficient reason to be given for it. In all probability it was purposely avoided by the Holy Spirit in settling the first Christian churches in the world, both among the heathen and among the Jews — but especially for the sake of the Jews, and out of tenderness to the Jewish Christians. For it is evident that Christ and the apostles declared one thing after another to them gradually, as they could bear it.

The Jews had a regard for their Sabbath above almost anything in the laws of Moses; and in the Old Testament, there was that which tended to uphold them in their observance of it, much more strongly than anything else that was Jewish. God had made so much of it, had so solemnly, frequently, and carefully commanded it, and had often so dreadfully punished the breach of it, that there was more cause for their retaining this custom, than almost any other.

Therefore, Christ dealt very tenderly with them in this point. Other things of this nature we find very gradually revealed. Christ had many things to say, as we are informed, which yet he said not say, because they could not as yet bear them, and he gave this reason for it: that it was like

putting new wine into old bottles.¹ They were so contrary to their old customs, that Christ was gradual in revealing them. He gave here a little and there a little, as they could bear it; and it was a long time before he told them plainly the principal doctrines of the kingdom of heaven. He took the most favourable opportunities to tell them of his sufferings and death, especially when they were full of admiration at some signal miracle, and were confirmed in it that he was the Messiah.

He told them many things much more plainly after his resurrection than before. But even then, he did not tell them all, but left more to be revealed by the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. Therefore, they were much more enlightened after that, than before. However, as yet he did not reveal all. The abolition of the ceremonial law about meats and drinks was not fully known till after this.

The apostles were, in the same manner, careful and tender with those to whom they preached and wrote. It was very gradually that they ventured to teach them the cessation of the ceremonial laws of circumcision, and abstinence from unclean meats. How tender the apostle Paul is with those who scrupled, in the fourteenth chapter of Romans! He directs those who had knowledge, to keep it to themselves, for the sake of their weak brethren. Rom 14.22. But I need say no more to evince this.

However, I will say this: that it is very possible that the apostles themselves at first might not have this change of the day of the Sabbath fully revealed to them. The Holy Ghost, at his descent, revealed much to them. Yet after that, they were ignorant of much of gospel-doctrine. Indeed, they were ignorant a great while after they acted the part of apostles — in preaching, baptizing, and governing the church. Peter was surprised when he was commanded to eat meats that legally were unclean; and so were the apostles in general, when Peter was commanded to go to the Gentiles, to preach to them.

Thus Christ was tender with the church while it was an infant. He did not feed them with strong meat, but was careful to bring in the observance of the Lord's day by degrees. And therefore he took all occasions to honour it, by appearing from time to time on that day, by choice; by sending down his Spirit on that day and in that remarkable manner at Pentecost; by ordering Christians to meet in order to break bread on that day, and by ordering their contributions and other duties of worship to be held on it. Thus he introduced the observance of it by degrees. And though as yet the Holy Ghost did not speak very plainly about it, God took special care that there would be sufficient evidences of his will, to be discovered by the Christian church when it became more established and settled, and had come to the strength of a man.

Thus I leave it with each one to judge whether there is not sufficient evidence that it is the mind and will of God, that the first day of the week should be kept by the Christian church as a Sabbath.

¹ Joh 16.12; Mat 9.17.

I have already discussed this *doctrine* under two propositions, showing, *first*, That it is the will of God that one day of the week, in all ages, should be set apart for religious duties; and *secondly*, That under the gospel, this day ought to be the *first* day of the week. I will now proceed to the,

APPLICATION.

This will be in a use of *exhortation*.

1. Let us be *thankful* for the institution of the Christian Sabbath. It is a thing in which God has shown his mercy to us, and his care for our souls. He shows by his infinite wisdom, that he is contriving for our good — as Christ teaches us, the Sabbath was made for man; Mar 2.27, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." It was made for the profit and for the comfort of our souls.

The Sabbath is a day of *rest*: God has appointed that every seventh day, we should rest from all our worldly labours. Instead of that, he might have appointed for us to go through the hardest labours, some severe hardships for us to endure. It is a day of outward rest, but especially of *spiritual rest*. It is a day appointed by God, so that his people may find rest for their souls on it; that the souls of believers may rest and be refreshed in their Saviour. It is a day of *rejoicing*. God made it to be a joyful day to the church; Psa 118.24, "This is the day which the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." Those who rightly receive and improve the Sabbath, call it a *delight and honourable*: it is a pleasant and a joyful day to them; it is an image of the future heavenly rest of the church. Heb 4.9-11, "There remains therefore a rest" (or Sabbatism, as it is in the original) "for the people of God. For he that has entered into his rest, has also ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest."

The Christian Sabbath is one of the most precious enjoyments of the visible church. Christ showed his love to his church in instituting it; and it becomes the Christian church to be thankful to her Lord for it. The very name of this day, *the Lord's day*, or *Jesus' day*, should endear it to Christians, as it intimates the special relation it has to Christ; and also the design of it, which is the commemoration of our dear Saviour, and his love for his church in redeeming it.

2. Be exhorted to *keep* this day holy. God has given such evidences that this is his mind, that he will surely require it of you, if you do not strictly and conscientiously observe it. And if you thus observe it, you may have this comfort in the reflection upon your conduct: that you have not been superstitious in it. Rather, you have done as God revealed it to be his mind and will in his word; and in so doing, you are in the path of God's acceptance and reward.

Here let me lay before you the following *motives* to excite you to this duty.

(1.) By a strict observation of the Sabbath, the name of God is honoured, and that is done in such a way that it is very acceptable to him. Isa 58.13, "If you call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and shall honour him." God is honoured by it, as it is a visible manifestation of respect for God's holy law, and a reverence for what has a peculiar relation to God himself; and that is more, in some respects, than the observance of many other commands. And a man may be just, and generous, and yet not so plainly show respect for the revealed mind and will of God — for many of the heathen have been so. But if a person observes the Sabbath with evident strictness and care, then it is a visible manifestation of a conscientious regard for God's declaration of his mind, and so it is a visible honour done to his authority.

By a strict observance of the Sabbath, the face of religion is kept up in the world. If it were not for the Sabbath, there would be little public and visible appearance of serving, worshipping, and reverencing the supreme and invisible Being.

The Sabbath seems to have been appointed very much for this end — *namely*, to uphold the visibility of religion in public, or among professing societies of men. The greater the strictness with which the Sabbath is observed among a people, and the greater the solemnity with which its duties are observed, the greater is the manifestation among them of respect for the Divine Being.

This should be a powerful motive with us to observe the Sabbath. It should be our study above all things to honour and glorify God. It should be the great thing with all who bear the name of *Christians*, to honour their great God and King — and I hope it is a great thing with many who hear me at this time. If it is your inquiry, if it is your desire, to honour God, then by this subject you are directed to one way by which you may do much in this regard — *namely*, by honouring the Sabbath, and by showing a careful and strict observance of it.

(2.) That which is the business of the Sabbath, is the greatest business of our lives — *namely*, that of religion. To serve and worship God is that for which we were made, and for which we had our being given to us. Other business, which is of a secular nature, and which we usually attend to on weekdays, is but subordinate, and ought to be subservient to the higher purposes and ends of religion. Therefore, surely we should not think much of devoting one seventh of our time, to be *wholly* spent in this business, and to be set apart to exercise ourselves in the immediate duties of religion.

(3.) Let it be considered that all our time is God's; and therefore, when he challenges us to give one day in seven, he challenges us for his *own* time. He does not exceed his right; he would not have exceeded it if he had challenged a far greater proportion of our time to be spent in his immediate service. But he has mercifully considered our state, and our necessities here. And as he has consulted the good of our souls in appointing a seventh day for the immediate duties of religion, so he has considered our outward necessities, and has allowed us six days for attending to our outward affairs. What an unworthy treatment of God it would therefore be, if we refuse to allow him even the seventh day!

(4.) As the Sabbath is a day which is especially set apart for religious exercises, so it is a day in which God especially confers his grace and blessing. As God has commanded us to set it apart to have converse with him, so he has set it apart for himself to have converse with us. As God has commanded us to observe the Sabbath, so God observes the Sabbath too. It is with respect to the Sabbath, as Solomon prayed that it might be with respect to the temple, 2Chr 6.20.¹ His eyes are open upon it. He stands ready then, especially to hear prayers, to accept religious services, to meet his people, to manifest himself to them, and to give his Holy Spirit and blessing to those who diligently and conscientiously sanctify it.

That we should sanctify the Sabbath, as we observed, is according to God's institution. God in a sense observes his own institutions; *i.e.* he usually causes them to be attended with a blessing. The institutions of God are his appointed means of grace. And with his institutions, he has promised his blessing; Exo 20.24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come to

¹ [2Chr 6:20](#) "that Your eyes may be open toward this temple day and night, toward the place where *You* said *You would* put Your name, that *You* may hear the prayer which Your servant prays toward this place.

you, and I will bless you." For the same reason we may conclude that God will meet his people and bless them, waiting upon him not only in appointed *places*, but at appointed times, and in all appointed ways.

Christ has promised, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them, Mat 18.20. One thing included in the expression, *in his name*, is that it is by his appointment, and according to his institution.

God has made it our duty, by his institution, to set apart this day for a special seeking of his grace and blessing. From this we may argue that he will be especially ready to confer his grace on those who thus seek it. If it is the day on which God requires us to especially seek him, then we may argue that it is a day on which he will especially be found. That God is ready on this day especially, to bestow his blessing on those who keep it rightly, is implied in that expression of God's blessing the Sabbath-day. God not only hallowed the Sabbath-day, but he blessed it; he has given his blessing to it, and he will confer his blessing on all those who duly observe it. He has hallowed it, or appointed that it be kept holy by us, and he has blessed it; he has determined to give his blessing upon it.

So here is great encouragement for us to keep the Sabbath holy: if we would seek God's grace and our own spiritual good. The Sabbath-day is an accepted time, a day of salvation, a time in which God especially loves to be sought, and loves to be found. The Lord Jesus Christ takes delight in his own day — he delights to honour it; he delights to meet with and manifest himself to his disciples on it. He showed this before his ascension, by appearing to them from time to time on this day. And on this day he delights to give his Holy Spirit, as he intimated by choosing it as the day on which he poured out the Spirit in so remarkable a manner on the primitive church; [Act 1.1-2](#) and on which he gave his Spirit to the apostle John. [Rev 1.10](#)

Of old, God blessed the seventh day, or appointed it to be a day on which, especially, he would bestow blessings on his people as an expression of his own joyful remembrance of that day; and of the rest and refreshment which he had on it. Exo 31.16-17, "Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath-day. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." As princes give gifts on their birthdays, marriage days, and the like, so God was accustomed to dispense spiritual gifts on the seventh day.

But Christ has even more reason to bless the day of his resurrection, and to delight to honour it, and to confer his grace and blessed gifts on his people on this day. It was a day on which Christ rested and was refreshed in a literal sense. It was a day of deliverance from the chains of death — the day of his finishing that great and difficult work of redemption which had been on his heart from all eternity — the day of his justification by the Father — the day of the beginning of his exaltation, and of the fulfilment of the promises of the Father — the day when he had eternal life, which he had purchased, put into his hands.¹ On this day, Christ does indeed delight to distribute gifts, and blessings, and joy, and happiness; and he will delight to do the same to the end of the world.

¹ [Joh 10:28](#) "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. [Joh 17:1](#) Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. [Rom 8:11](#) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

O, therefore, it is well worth our while to improve this day, to call upon God and seek Jesus Christ! Let awakened sinners be stirred up by these things to improve the Sabbath-day, as they would lay themselves most in the way of the Spirit of God. Improve this day to call upon God; for then he is near. Improve it for reading the Holy Scriptures, and diligently attending to his word being preached; for then is the likeliest time to have the Spirit accompanying it. Let the saints who desire to grow in grace, and enjoy communion with Christ, improve the Sabbath in order for that.

(5.) The last motive which I will mention, is the experience of the influence which a strict observance of the Sabbath has upon the whole of religion. It may be observed that in those places where the Sabbath is well kept, religion in general will flourish most; and in those places where the Sabbath is not noticed much, and not much is made of it, there is no great matter of religion anyway. But,

INQUIRY. *How should we keep the Sabbath?*

ANS. 1. We ought to be exceedingly careful on this day to abstain from sin. Indeed, all breaches of the Sabbath are sinful; but we speak now of those things which are sinful in themselves, or sinful on other accounts, besides being done on the Sabbath. The Sabbath being a holy time, it is especially defiled by the commission of sin. Sin committed on this day, becomes all the more exceedingly sinful. We are required to abstain from sin at all times, but especially at a holy time. The commission of immoralities on the Sabbath is the worst way of profaning it, that which most provokes God, and brings most guilt upon the souls of men.

How provoking it must be to God, when men do those sinful things on that same day which he has sanctified, and has set apart to be spent in the immediate exercises of religion — things which are not fit to be done on *common* days, things which are impure and wicked *whenever* they are done!

Therefore, if any persons are guilty of any such wickedness — such as intemperance, or any unclean actions — they profane the Sabbath in a very horrid manner. Or if they are guilty of wickedness in speech, of talking profanely or in an unclean and lascivious manner, or of talking against their neighbours, they profane the Sabbath in a dreadful manner. Yet very commonly, those who are used to such things on weekdays, do not have a conscience to restrain them on the Sabbath. It is good if those who indulge the lust of uncleanness on weekdays, are not in some way or other unclean on the Sabbath too. They would indulge the same lusts then; they would indulge their impure flames in their imaginations at least: and so it is good if they can keep clear while in the house of God, and while they pretend to be worshipping God. The unclean young man gives this account of himself, Pro 5.14, "I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and the assembly." So those who are addicted to an impure way of talking during the week, have nothing to keep them from doing the same on the Sabbath when they meet together. But God is dreadfully provoked by such things.

We ought carefully to watch over our own hearts, and to avoid all sinful thoughts on the Sabbath. We ought to maintain such a reverence for the Sabbath, as to have a particular dread of sin, so that it will awe us to a very careful watch over ourselves.

ANS. 2. We ought to be careful to abstain from all worldly concerns. As we have shown, the reason why it is needful and proper that certain stated portions of time be set apart to be devoted to religious exercises, is because the state of mankind is such in this world, that they need to

exercise their minds, and employ their thoughts, about secular matters. It is therefore convenient¹ to have stated times in which all are be obliged to set aside all other concerns, so that their minds may more freely, and with less entanglement, be engaged in religious and spiritual exercises.

We are therefore to do this, or else we frustrate the very design of the institution of a Sabbath. We are to strictly abstain from being outwardly engaged in any worldly thing, either worldly business or recreations. We are to rest in remembrance of God's rest from the work of creation, and of Christ's rest from the work of redemption. We should be careful that we do not encroach on the Sabbath at its beginning, by busying ourselves about the world after the Sabbath has begun. We should avoid talking about worldly matters, and even thinking about them — for whether we outwardly concern ourselves with the world or not, if our minds are on it, we frustrate the purpose of the Sabbath. The purpose of its separation from other days is that our minds may be disengaged from worldly things. And we are to avoid being outwardly concerned with the world only for this reason: that we cannot do that without taking up our minds. We should therefore give the world no place in our thoughts on the Sabbath, but abstract² ourselves from all worldly concerns, and maintain a watch over ourselves, so that the world does not encroach, as it is very apt to do, Isa 58.13-14.³

ANS. 3. We ought to spend the time in religious exercises. This is the more ultimate end of the Sabbath. We are to keep our minds separate from the world, principally for this end: that we may be more freed for religious exercises. Though it is a day of *rest*, it was not designed to be a day of *idleness*. To rest from worldly employments, without employing ourselves about anything, is only to lay ourselves that much more in the devil's way. The mind will be employed some way or another; and therefore doubtless the end for which we are to call our minds away from worldly things on the Sabbath, is that we may employ them about things that are *better*.

We are to attend to spiritual exercises with the greatest diligence. That it is a day of rest, does not hinder us in doing so; for we are to look at spiritual exercises as the rest and refreshment of the soul. In heaven, where the people of God have the most perfect rest, they are not idle, but are employed in spiritual and heavenly exercises. We should take care, therefore, to employ our minds on a Sabbath-day on spiritual objects by holy meditation; improving⁴ the Holy Scriptures for our help in this, and other books that are in accord with the word of God. We should also employ ourselves outwardly on this day in the duties of divine worship, in public *and* private. It is proper to be more frequent and abundant in secret duties on this day than other days, as we have time and opportunity, as well as attending public ordinances.

It is proper on this day, not only to especially promote the exercise of religion in ourselves, but also in others; to assist them and endeavour to promote their spiritual good by religious conference. Especially those who have care of others, should endeavour on this day to promote their spiritual good. Heads of families should be instructing and counselling their children, and

¹ *Convenient*: Suited to the purpose or needs.

² *Abstract*: to disengage or separate.

³ **Isa 58:13** "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *From* doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy *day* of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking *your own* words, ¹⁴ Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁴ *Improve*: to use or employ to good purpose; to turn to profitable account.

quicken them in the ways of religion, and see to it that the Sabbath is strictly kept in their houses. A particular blessing may be expected on those families where there is due care taken that the Sabbath be strictly and devoutly observed.¹

ANS. 4. We are, on this day especially, to meditate upon and celebrate the work of redemption. We are to remember the resurrection of Christ with special joy, because that was the finishing of that work.

And this is the day on which Christ rested and was refreshed after those extreme labours which he had endured for our perishing souls. This was the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; it was the day of his deliverance from the chains of death, and also of *our* deliverance — for we are delivered in him who is our Head. He rose with his elect, as it were. He is the first-fruits; and those who are Christ's will follow. When he rose, Christ was justified as a public person;² and we are justified in him. This is the day of our deliverance out of Egypt.

We should therefore meditate on this with joy; we should have a sympathy with Christ in *his* joy. As he was refreshed on this day, so we should be refreshed as those whose hearts are united with his. When Christ rejoices, it becomes all his church everywhere to rejoice. We are to say of this day, Psa 118.24. "This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

But we are not only to commemorate the resurrection of Christ, but the whole work of redemption, of which this was the finishing. We keep the day on which the work was finished, because it is in remembrance of the whole work. On this day we should contemplate the wonderful love of God and of Christ, as expressed in the work of redemption. Our remembrance of these things should be accompanied with suitable exercises of our soul with respect to them. When we call to mind the love of Christ, it should be with a loving response on our part. When we commemorate this work, it should be with faith in the Saviour. And we should praise God and the Lamb for this work — for the divine glory and love manifested in it — in our private and public prayers, in talking of the wonderful works of God, and in singing divine songs.

Hence it is proper that Christ's disciples should choose this day to come together to break bread, or to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper, Act 20.7, because it is an ordinance instituted in remembrance of the work of redemption.

ANS. 5. Works of mercy and charity are very proper and acceptable to Christ on this day. They were proper on the ancient Sabbath. Christ was in the habit of doing such works on the Sabbath-day. But they especially become the Christian Sabbath, because it is a day that is kept in commemoration of the greatest work of mercy and love towards us that was ever wrought. What could be more proper on such a day, than to express our love and mercy towards our fellow-creatures, and especially our fellow-Christians? Christ loves to see us show our thankfulness to him in such ways as these.

Therefore, we find that the Holy Ghost was especially careful in the primitive church, that such works be performed on the first day of the week, as we learn by our text.

¹ The blessing on Jonathan Edwards' household included, over the next 150 years, 1 U.S. Vice-President, 3 U.S. Senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 13 college presidents, 30 judges, 65 professors, 80 public office holders, 100 lawyers and 100 missionaries.

² *Public person*: a representative of others, standing in their stead and on their behalf.