

# PROPER SABBATH OBSERVANCE

Herman Hoeksema

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# About the Heritage Collection

The Heritage Collection consists of pamphlets on various subjects that were written by Protestant Reformed ministers from approximately the 1930s to the 1970s. At first they were printed and distributed as small plain covered pamphlets by the First Protestant Reformed Church Sunday School. Eventually, the printing was taken over by the church's evangelism society and their appearance was updated.

Background information on most of these pamphlets is sketchy. Some were written in response, occasionally fiery, to doctrinal struggles that took place at particular times. Often they were first delivered in lecture form and then printed to facilitate wider distribution. The earlier authors are in glory; the later ones are retired ministers.

Characteristics of the pamphlets are that they are solidly Reformed and Scripturally based – many abound in Scriptural proof texts – and, given the limited amount of space in pamphlets, provide a comprehensive overview and perspective on their topics. They are often not light reading, but taking the time to read them, study them, and savor the many insights they provide can be conducive to spiritual growth.

The writing of many of the pamphlets was sparked by debates decades ago, but the issues they address are still relevant for readers today. These issues always need to be clarified for those encountering the Christian faith for the first time and for each new generation of believers. Some of the more involved pamphlets may be of greatest benefit to believers who already have a background in the Scriptures.

It is our hope that these voices from a past era may continue to bless readers in the future as they have in many previous years.

# Introduction

This pamphlet was probably written in the 1950's. It is interesting that though most of us today would regard this decade as a simpler time in which it would be easier to keep a spiritual perspective on the Sabbath Day, Rev. Hoeksma talks with alarm about the problem of Sabbath desecration. He fears that the sudden economic prosperity of his time and the resulting easy availability of new things (automobiles and radios!) are infringing on daily lives and crowding out family devotions, family fellowship, and home life.

Things have changed since that time. Today the average person has access to more material possessions than Herman Hoeksema's original audience did. In addition, the tide has shifted so that today there is very little push to legislate the Sabbath Day. However, a biblical perspective on this day is needed as much or more now as it was when this was written. The teaching that Christians are only pilgrims and strangers on this earth and that God has given the Sabbath Day for the purpose of weekly lifting us up to spiritual things will always be needed.

“The true significance of the Sabbath,” Rev. Hoeksema states, (is) ”that it was not ordained for recreation and pleasure-seeking; that its chief purpose that is not even that we might rest from our daily toil and labor; but that on that day we should be occupied exclusively with things spiritual and heavenly, that so it might have a sanctifying influence on our whole life in the midst of the world, and more fervently long for the eternal Sabbath.”

In this pamphlet, Rev. Hoeksema comprehensively covers: the idea of the Sabbath, its different phases in the historical development of God's work, and the importance of properly observing it. It would be worthwhile to read and study this explanation of the principles involved in the observance of the Sabbath.

## About the Author

Herman Hoeksema (1886-1965) was a minister of the gospel and a theologian in the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

This pamphlet is a 2013 reprint of his original work, with grammar and text slightly edited for readability.

# Proper Sabbath Observance (The Sojourner's Sabbath)

Herman Hoeksema

This pamphlet, let it be said at the outset, will be found to be quite different from all treatises on the keeping of the Sabbath that aim to be a plea for Sabbath observance by the world in general and, therefore, would emphasize the necessity of legislation and of enforcing the already existing laws pertaining to restriction of labor, business, traffic, and public amusements on Sunday.<sup>1</sup> In the face of the danger that this little treatise will meet with severe criticism from the very first from those who are of the opinion that it is possible to legislate the world into keeping the Sabbath, I must nevertheless maintain that this is quite impossible. The keeping of the Sabbath is a highly spiritual matter, an act of faith and hope that can be performed only by the Christian who professes in word and walk that he has become a stranger in this world and is looking forward to the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fades not away, to the eternal Sabbath that remains for the people of God. To this sojourner and pilgrim in a strange country, to the church of Christ in the world, this pamphlet is addressed. It purposes to be a word of encouragement and comfort on the one hand, and a word of warning and admonition on the other.

Also of warning and admonition. For it cannot be denied that desecration of the Sabbath is in our day an evil that is assuming alarming proportions, and that the danger is more than imaginary that the Christian pilgrim, as he lives in and travels through this strange land, will defile his garments and adopt the habits of the world in this respect. Many causes and circumstances have, especially in late years, concurred to aggravate this danger. The

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<sup>1</sup> This pamphlet was written soon after the conclusion of World War II. At that time there was a push among some for laws to legislate the Sabbath.

wave of abnormal economic prosperity that swept our country surely did not prove to be a spiritual blessing for many children of God, but was conducive rather to a spirit of worldly-mindedness by which they also were overcome to a greater extent than they realized or were willing to admit.<sup>2</sup> Everybody is prosperous in the things of the world, has sufficient means to seek after and, in a measure, to obtain the commodities and even the luxuries necessary for the enjoyment of this present life. Not to possess an automobile is an uncommon thing. Young and old spend their time of leisure “between the wheels.” Home life is destroyed. Family fellowship has become a strange thing. The family altar is forgotten. If one is not on the road to enjoy a ride, he finds his home connected with every conceivable place of amusement by means of the radio, which has become almost as common as the auto.

Man has become amusement crazy. Life seems to be without care and worry. The things of the present time occupy a chief place in our hearts and minds. The heavenly things recede into the background and gradually appear with less frequency above the threshold of our consciousness.

Small wonder that with such a spirit of frivolous world-seeking and practical materialism the Sabbath is no longer remembered by many, and desecration of the first day of the week has become customary. Even as the Sabbath was ordained for the purpose of lifting up the pilgrim-stranger in this world to things heavenly and spiritual, so it could, in the world, serve the purpose of enjoying the things earthly and material better than any other day of the week. And even as this desecration of the Sabbath itself has its source in a spirit of worldly-mindedness, so it exerts a reflex influence upon the minds and lives of the people of God so that they become less heavenminded, more attached to the things of the world. The true significance of the Sabbath—that it was not

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2 This sentence, and the ones immediately following, describe life shortly after World War II.

ordained for recreation and pleasure-seeking; that its chief purpose is not even that we might rest from our daily toil and labor; but that on that day we should be occupied exclusively with things spiritual and heavenly, so that it might have a sanctifying influence on our whole life in the midst of the world, and that we might have a foretaste of and more and more fervently long for the eternal Sabbath—this true import of keeping the Sabbath is no longer understood.

Hence, it is the positive purpose of this pamphlet to call attention to this spiritual significance of the Sabbath and to exhort God's people in the world to keep the Sabbath of the Lord their God. The word of the prophet of old is still true today: "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil" (Isaiah 56:2). He will be able to lay hold on the promise: "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed" (Isaiah 56:1).

I will attempt to develop in this pamphlet:

I. The *idea* of the Sabbath, that of our entering into God's rest, perfected for His people in Christ Jesus.

II. The *different phases* of the Sabbath in the historical development of God's work, as He prepares the rest for His people.

III. The importance of *properly observing* the Sabbath for the Christian pilgrim in a strange country.

## **Idea of the Sabbath**

That the Sabbath in its deepest sense has to do with the Lord's rest is abundantly proven from the Holy Scriptures. It has its beginning in the rest of the Lord on the seventh day after the six days of creative work in which the heavens and the earth were finished.

For “on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made” (Genesis 2:2). Because of this rest from all His work that He had made on that seventh day, He blessed and sanctified it (Genesis 2:3). It is, in the Ten Commandments, called “the Sabbath of the LORD thy God” (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14). In Leviticus 23:3 we read: “Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.” And in Isaiah 58:13–14: “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD.” Psalm 95:11 reads: “Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.”

Although it is true that in this last passage the original does not use the word “sabbath” for rest, and although it is equally true that the first reference of the phrase “my rest” is to the land of Canaan, yet it is evident from Hebrews 4 that this “my rest” has also a higher, an ultimate meaning, and that essentially it is expressing the very idea of the Sabbath. For the author of the epistle to the Hebrews applies the text from Psalm 95 directly to the final rest of the Sabbath that remains for the people of God. They, the unbelievers in the desert, could not enter into God’s rest because of their unbelief (Hebrews 3:19). “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Hebrews 4:1). When finally the author writes, “There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9), he uses the very word *Sabbath* for what is translated “rest” in our language. The Sabbath, therefore, is God’s rest, God’s holy day, the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, His rest, for which we are admonished to labor in order to enter therein (Hebrews 4:11).

This must necessarily determine the true implication of the notion of rest. The word *Sabbath* means literally “rest,” and the primary notion appears to be that of ceasing and desisting from work.

However, we should not make the mistake of confusing the idea of sabbatic rest with that of complete idleness. Idleness and rest are by no means identical. The former is necessarily sinful and always condemned in the Word of God. Strictly speaking, man who is created after the image of God cannot be really idle in the sense that he ceases from all activity and labor. Even though he should stretch his body on a bed, so that he refrains from all physical labor, he would be still busy thinking and willing, planning and desiring, and it would prove to be an absolute impossibility for him to force himself into a state of complete inactivity.

Neither is it the chief purpose of the Sabbath that we refrain from all earthly labor, nor is there anything especially meritorious or holy in the mere fact that on the Sabbath day we cease from our weekly toil. To raise this notion of desisting from work to the primary and main idea of the Sabbath is the error of Pharisaism, always severely condemned by the Lord. It is very evident that one may completely refrain from doing any work on the first day of the week and yet so crowd the day with his own work, with speaking his own words and following after his own pleasure, that for him the day becomes of all days most unholy. It is, therefore, important that we bear in mind from the outset that rest and idleness are not identical. In fact, that we desist from daily labor on the first day of the week has its purpose in the positive notion that we should fill the day with other activities, with the work of and for *the rest*.

Rest is the entering into and the enjoyment of a finished and perfected work. In this sense the rest is absolutely *of the Lord*. God is not an idle God. He is never idle. He is unceasingly, from eternity to eternity, active. As the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three in Person, one in Being, He lives the life of infinitely perfect action. Yet in God is *the rest*. There is in Him no labor, no toil, no struggle and strife to reach a certain end, to accomplish a certain work. For His work is eternally finished and perfect. From everlasting to everlasting He lives the infinitely perfect life of covenant-fellowship and divine friendship within Himself. From eternity to eternity the Father generates and gives life to the Son, yet this divine activity of eternal generation is

eternally perfect. From everlasting to everlasting the Son is generated by the Father, yet with infinitely perfect love, the Son cries eternally: Abba, Father! Eternally the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, yet this procession is eternally finished and perfect. God is infinite action and perfect rest. His action is His rest. And in this eternal rest of perfect action, in which there is never a moment of idleness, He rejoices with the divine joy of eternally entering into the perfect covenant-fellowship with Himself. This divine covenant-life of God is the rest of God, the divine and eternal Sabbath of the Lord.

Now it is God's eternal good pleasure to prepare a rest for His people in Christ Jesus, which should be a reflection, a manifestation, of the rest of His own divine covenant-life. This rest of God's perfected covenant with us is the Sabbath that remains for the people of God; it is the essential idea of the Sabbath of the Lord our God with respect to us. For it is His eternal purpose that He ordained those whom He foreknew to be conformed according to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren, to call, to justify, to glorify them (Romans 8:29, 30). Yea, the glory of the exceeding great promises, which God gave unto His people, is so great that by these they even are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). According to this purpose they are chosen, in order that they should be holy and unblamable before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4); that they should be renewed after the image of God in knowledge of Him (Colossians 3:10), in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24); that they might have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3), might be in the Father and in the Son (1 John 2:24), might know Him, love Him, walk with Him and talk with Him, enter into His secrets, eat with Him and drink with Him, dwell in His house, yea, know Him as they are known, see Him face to face, and be like Him in perfection (John 17:3, 21–23; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Matthew 5:8; Psalms 17:15; 25:14).

They shall be the temple of God, and He will dwell in them and walk in them and be their God, and they shall be His people (2 Corinthians 6:16). In that perfect rest, when the perfected throne of

God and of the Lamb shall be in it, His servants shall serve Him. “They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:3–5).

That heavenly rest, a perfect though creaturely reflection of God’s own Sabbath, of His divine covenant-life, that perfected fellowship of friendship with the living God, is the Sabbath God prepares for those who love Him. And into that rest of God they enter. This entering into God’s perfected work, into His rest, His Sabbath, is the idea of the Sabbath according to Scripture.

Of that Sabbath, indeed, our whole life in this world must be a manifestation. Also in the midst of the world we must be friends of God, for the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4). We must walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called with all lowliness and meekness, be followers of God as dear children, walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and walk as children of light (Ephesians 4:1, 2; 5:1, 2, 8); be blameless and harmless, and sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world (Phil. 2:15); and our conversation must be in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20). We are admonished always to seek the things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and to set our affection on them (Colossians 3:1–2).

There is with respect to these things no difference between one day and another. But the things of this present time, the cares and anxieties of the world, our daily toil and labor have a tendency to draw us downward to the things of the earth; and the battle with the devil, the world, and sin is hard. Neither are we as yet perfectly delivered from sin. What a blessing, then, that one day of the week we may rest from our daily toil, separate ourselves in a special sense from the world about us, and gather with the people of God, to set our minds wholly on the things that are above!

Such, then, is the idea of our weekly Sabbath. The vacuum that is created by desisting from our daily toil is no end in itself, neither is one day holier than the other; but the rest from our daily labors must serve the purpose of creating the proper opportunity for the church of Christ in the world to occupy itself wholly with things spiritual and eternal, to set its mind entirely on the things that are above, to be busy with the exceeding great promises only. Thus we will be strengthened for that battle that must necessarily be fought, if our whole life is to be a reflection of the eternal Sabbath and we are to be friends of God in the midst of the world, blameless and without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

## **Different Phases of the Sabbath**

If this idea of the Sabbath is understood, it will not be difficult to see the reason why we speak, in our second proposition, of the *different phases* of the Sabbath in its historical development or realization, as God prepares the rest for His people. The work that God performs for His people in preparing for them His rest, though perfect in His counsel from all eternity, is realized for us in time, follows a certain line of historical development, and in the course of history presents certain distinct phases. I consider it the fundamental error of the Seventh Day Adventist that he does not recognize this historical progress of God's work and therefore insists that even now we must celebrate the Sabbath of creation. Yet it is to be feared that many people of God today understand very little of this fundamental error and, although by force of tradition they keep the first day of the week, might easily be swept off their feet if they should be called to defend their position.

It is, then, not superfluous to call attention to this historical development of the Sabbath of the Lord our God in its different phases. These different phases or stages of development we may designate by these terms: creation-sabbath, shadow-sabbath, resurrection-sabbath, and the final or perfected-sabbath in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. All the more proper it is to call attention to these stages of development because the Word of God points us to them in Hebrews 4. For, clearly, the author of that epistle speaks

of the creation-sabbath in the latter part of chapter 4:3 and in verse four, where he writes: “Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” Yet, the author continues, although this creation-rest would appear to be *the rest of God*, He also spoke of another day as His rest, namely, one that He prepared for His people in the land of Canaan, when He said: “If they shall enter into my rest” (verse 5)! This, then, was another rest, another Sabbath, a different stage in the development of the Sabbath. But even this is not the final stage. For in David He speaks of still another day, when He says: “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts [looking forward, therefore, to another rest than that of Canaan]. For if Jesus [Joshua of the old dispensation] had given them rest [when he led them into the land of Canaan], then would he not afterward have spoken of another day” (verses 7, 8). That other day is the day of the new dispensation. Now the work of God is perfected in Christ Jesus. Yet it is not yet manifested in all its glory, and there remains therefore still a Sabbath for the people of God (verse 9).

First of all, then, Scripture speaks of the Sabbath of creation. God had finished the creation of the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested. This certainly does not imply that the Almighty and ever-living God was idle for a day, for as we showed in our first proposition, this is quite inconceivable, being in conflict with the divine nature. The Lord emphatically denies this when He says to the criticizing Jews: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). But it does signify that He ceased from creating and that He entered into the enjoyment of His finished work.

He also sanctified and blessed that seventh day, so that it became a Sabbath for man. For man was to enter into God’s rest. He was created after God’s own image, that is, with a creaturely likeness of God, adapted to live in God’s covenant-fellowship, in true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness, that He might know God, love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, be wholly consecrated to Him alone, and serve Him as

king under God in connection with the entire earthly creation. Man was God's friend-servant. And in the first Paradise it was his calling to labor to enter into God's rest, keeping the garden, opposing the devil, and maintaining the covenant of God. Thus man would celebrate the Sabbath and eat of the tree of life, which was in the midst of the garden.

But the first man did not enter into the rest of God. He violated the covenant of God, denied his Sovereign-friend, and became a friend of Satan, the enemy of God. He fell, and the whole human race with him, into that which is the very antithesis of the Sabbath of the Lord—the labor and toil, the darkness and corruption, the guilt and unrest of sin, the wages of which is death. God had spoken of His rest to man, and the first man had despised the rest. And God had sworn that man should not enter into His rest. He was exiled and banished from God's presence. The tabernacle of God had appeared in Paradise long enough to be shown as an image of glorious things, but in the first man Adam it could not be maintained and glorified. It was with man no longer.

But God had provided some better thing for us (Hebrews 11:40). Although His works were finished from the foundation of the world (Hebrews 4:3), and although He rested on the seventh day from all His works (Hebrews 4:4), and although He had created man to enter into that rest with Him and in His fellowship, so that when man failed to enter into that rest of creation the Sabbath seemed passed and lost forever, yet He spoke of another day, of a better and higher rest that was to come. His counsel was not finished with the work of creation, neither at all frustrated by the fall of man. For the better thing that He had provided for His people in Christ Jesus is the eternal rest of the highest and perfect manifestation of His covenant-life, the heavenly tabernacle of God with men. Of that eternal tabernacle the first Paradise was but an image.

When the image disappeared, God began a new work, the work of grace and salvation. He began to realize the higher manifestation of His covenant and to lead His people into the rest of that other

day of which He spoke and always speaks in the gospel. It is the work of grace by which He causes them to cease from the labor and toil and slavery of sin, delivers them from the bondage of corruption and darkness and death, and leads them into the perfect liberty of the children of God and to that highest covenant-fellowship in which they may know Him even as they are known, and see Him face to face.

Of that rest the land of Canaan was a type, even as Egypt was typical of the unrest and bondage of sin. When God delivered Israel with a mighty hand out of Egypt, led them through the Red Sea and through the desert, fed them with manna from heaven and quenched their thirst with water from the Rock, made them pass over Jordan and gave them the land of Canaan for a possession, He led them into the rest. Hence, the very heart of that land was to be sought in the tabernacle and temple, where God dwelled with and among His people. Hence, too, Canaan was preeminently a Sabbath-land, and in it the people must celebrate the weekly Sabbath, the Sabbaths of many special festivals, the sabbatical year, and the year of jubilee. Hence, too, the weekly Sabbath was a memorial in Israel to make them remember the great deliverance that God had wrought for them when He liberated them from the yoke of bondage: “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day” (Deuteronomy 5:15). Joshua, therefore, had led the people of God into the rest that God had prepared for them.

Even so, the work of God was not finished. God had provided still some better things for us. Canaan was a phase of the Sabbath of the Lord, a stage in its historical development, a type of the better and eternal rest, but not the rest itself. In this final sense Joshua had not given the people rest. This is evident from the fact that even after Joshua had led them into the land of Canaan, God still speaks of another day, still puts the Sabbath in the future and in the light of the promise (Hebrews 4:8, 9). If Canaan had been the rest, He would not have spoken of another day.

The fact is that the whole of that typical rest, with oil and wine and corn, with temple and altar and sacrifice, with prophet and priest and king, with its continual threat of God's impending curse, which became more and more a reality as history advanced and was fulfilled when Jerusalem was finally destroyed and the nation was cast off—all these things loudly proclaimed that Canaan could not be the rest of God and that the earthly Jerusalem was no abiding city. The fact is, too, that under the influence of all these clear testimonies and in the light of the ever-repeated promise by the prophets, the true people of God in Israel longed to be delivered from the yoke of the law and lived in the hope of the salvation of the Lord. It was only in that hope that they could still keep the Sabbath, even in captivity, in a strange country (Isaiah 56:1, 2). The blood of bulls and goats, it gradually became more and more evident, could never make perfect and lead to the rest of the Lord.

God spoke of another day. He still worked to realize the rest for His people. And He realized it in Christ Jesus. He accomplished it when He sent His only begotten Son into the flesh, and in the Son united Himself in personal unity with man. In Him, God and man in unity of divine Person, the tabernacle is centrally with man in such a way that it can never be destroyed. God dwells with His people forever. He accomplished it when Christ labored at the head of all His people, to enter into the rest of God in the way of His justice and righteousness. For He labored and toiled, He strove and fought the battle alone against the powers of darkness, sin, and the devil. He suffered and shed His lifeblood in the toil. He died and entered into the agony of hell, as the faithful Friend-servant of God, the better and second Adam, who had come to do the Father's will. In the midst of His toil He became exceedingly sorrowful. In the depth of His suffering He became utterly amazed. Yet He was always perfectly obedient, and at the end of it all He could go in the peaceful consciousness that it was all finished. Through Him God accomplished the work, realized the rest, when He raised Him from the dead and gave Him heavenly glory.

Hence, we now speak of the resurrection-sabbath. God rested on that resurrection day from all His work. The Sabbath of the Lord is accomplished on the first day of the week. On the other, the glorious, the heavenly side of the open grave stands the Immanuel and proclaims: “It is finished. Rest from your toil and labor, from sin and death! Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!”

Into that rest of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we enter now by faith. It is the rest from all our own works, from sin and unrighteousness and death. Positively, it is the rest of entering into the perfect righteousness of God and His blessed covenant-fellowship.

Yet even now, the Sabbath is not fully manifested. Spiritually and in principle, indeed, the tabernacle of God is with men. We cease from works and have peace with God. But we are still living in a strange country. And though we do not battle to obtain, to merit the rest of God, yet we still must labor and fight because we possess the rest in principle. And in the world we shall have tribulation. Hence, while principally we have entered into the rest, the Sabbath still is presented to us in the light of the promise, and there still remains a rest for the people of God. The rest will be revealed when all God’s counsel is accomplished, when the last enemy shall have been overcome, when Christ shall come again, make our mortal bodies like unto His most glorious body, make all things new, and establish the glorious, heavenly, and eternal tabernacle of God with men. Then the work of God shall be finished and we shall enter with Him into the eternal rest of perfect fellowship, the Sabbath of perfect activity to the praise and glory of Him who loved us!

## **Properly Observing the Sabbath**

In the light of the foregoing, the importance of properly observing the weekly Sabbath for the sojourning Christian in this world will be almost self-evident.

First of all, it will be plain that they who insist on the seventh day instead of the first day of the week are utterly in error, proceed from a wrong conception principally, and fail to understand the significance of the Christian Sabbath. This error must not only be sought in the mistaken notion that one day is holier than the other, but more especially in the fact that the Seventh Day Adventist does not understand the progress of God's work and fails to see that God repeatedly spoke of another day. He does not understand that our Sabbath consists principally in our entering into the work that God perfected for us in Christ Jesus. He insists on the Sabbath of creation and of the shadows, and so insisting, closes his eyes to the fact that God has provided some better thing for us. The Sabbath of creation is gone forever, and the first Paradise will never and must never return. The Sabbath of the shadows was temporary, as are all the shadows, and the earthly land of Canaan is forever destroyed to open up new vistas of hope for the better, that is, the heavenly country.

A better day has dawned. And the dawn of this better day the Seventh Day Adventist ignores, does not behold. It dawned on the first day of the week, the resurrection day of the Lord who gives us rest! Small wonder that the disciples from the outset met on that day. Small wonder, especially in the light of the fact that again on the first day of the week the risen and glorified Lord returned in the Spirit and sanctified that day until His coming again in glory. On the first day of the week God entered into His rest through our Lord Jesus Christ, when He raised Him from the dead. On the first day of the week He spiritually bestowed that rest upon His church, which is the temple of God with men. It is on that day that the people of God celebrate the Sabbath of the Lord!

Again, it will also be self-evident, on the one hand, that it is quite impossible to legislate the world into proper observance of the Sabbath. At best, such legislation may be conducive to creating a better atmosphere for the people of God in the world to keep the Sabbath holy. And on the other hand, it will also be evident that the Sabbath is a spiritual idea and the keeping of the Sabbath is a highly spiritual act, the expression of hope and faith on the part of

the Christian sojourner in the midst of this present world. It is for this reason a very evil omen, a sign of apostasy, of a lack of spiritual life, of a sick faith and a waning hope, when they who call themselves Christians, who outwardly join the band of Christian pilgrims in the world, evince no longing to keep the Sabbath properly and more and more join the world and follow after their own desires, speak their own words, and do their own works.

For the Christian is really a stranger and sojourner, a pilgrim in a strange country, because principally he entered into the Sabbath of the Lord through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He is begotten again unto a lively hope through that resurrection. When he is regenerated, he receives the beginning of that new and resurrection life of the Lord. He ceases from his labor and toil. He rests from sin and the world. And he becomes a new man, the citizen of another country, the heavenly, of the New Jerusalem that will descend out of heaven from God in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He lives the Sabbath-life. Hence, his whole life is a sabbatic life, a ceasing from sin and an entering into the rest of God's perfected covenant.

But in this world his life is a sojourner's Sabbath. For he still sojourns in Babylon. And in Babylon they do not know the Sabbath of the Lord our God. They are strangers to the very idea of the Sabbath, of the rest of God's tabernacle. Small wonder, then, that in this Babylon they devote the first day of the week to the pursuit of earthly and worldly things, of the things of the flesh. But this is all the more reason why the Christian sojourner, living his Sabbath life in the midst of the world, where he feels that he is a stranger, where he meets with Babylon's opposition and reproach, where all things tend to draw him downward and to make it difficult to live his life of rest, shall long for the day that the Lord in His mercy provided for him and shall insist on keeping it holy!

He shall not entertain the notion that by merely refraining from earthly labor he is observing the Sabbath of the Lord. He shall not imagine that one day is holier than the other; the Pharisaistic view of the Sabbath is not his. But he shall as much as is in him desist

from every earthly task, remove from his mind and heart all earthly cares, in order that the whole day he may be occupied only with the Sabbath of the Lord, congregate with His people in His house, meditate on His Word, take hold of His promises, and let his whole conversation be in heaven!

“Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil” (Isaiah 56:2). For even as this keeping of the Sabbath is itself the expression of a healthy and vigorous spiritual life, of the lively hope unto which we are begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, so the proper observance of the Sabbath will bear the fruit that the church of Christ is strengthened in the most holy faith, quickened in the hope eternal, and sustained and encouraged to cease from evil works all the days of her life, yield herself to the Lord to work by His Holy Spirit in her, and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath. Blessed is that church that doeth this, for she has the sure promise of the Lord: My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed!

The following pamphlets are also available upon request:

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*The Biblical Grounds for Baptism of Infants*

*The Biblical Mode of Baptism*

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