

12. THE TEST OF ALLEGIANCE

ACCORDING to the notice posted on the bulletin board, I was scheduled to take an important examination on May 1 at nine o'clock in the morning. It was a six hour ordeal of the graduate school, and I dreaded it; but a more serious problem confronted me as I checked the day on which the examination would be given. It was Sabbath morning.

There was only one thing I could do, and I did it. The office of the professor who administered the examination was up one flight of stairs in the university building, and with nervous steps I headed for the necessary interview. As I opened the door I tried to imagine what his reaction would be to my request.

Seated at his desk, the youthful English professor, who, as I knew, had been teaching about the same length of time that I had, listened to my predicament. He was interested in my problem from an impersonal, scientific point of view.

"Why do you observe any rest day, anyway?" he asked me with a cynical note in his voice.

"To state it plainly, professor, it is a part of my allegiance to God."

"But where is there any proof in all the natural order of things for keeping a day of rest?"

"There isn't any," I frankly admitted. "The observance of the Sabbath must be based entirely upon a living faith in the word of God."

"That's a strange thing to admit," the pedagogue returned. "You actually have faith?"

"One must have faith to keep the Sabbath. There is no phenomenon in nature to mark one day in seven as a time of rest. The day is divided by light and darkness; there is a basis for the month in the phases of the moon, and the year is measured by the length of time required for the earth to make a complete rotation around the sun. But there is nothing in the calendar of nature to measure a week of seven days or to show which day is the Sabbath."

"Then why don't you go to church on the day accepted by the majority of Christians instead of on Saturday?" he probed.

"There is no point in keeping any day holy unless it is the day appointed by God," I replied.

"Well, this is very interesting, and I want to know more about your ideas on this subject," the professor was saying. "But first, if it will ease your mind, let me say that you can arrange to take the examination on another day without any inconvenience."

Taking a deep breath of relief I banished my problem and told my questioner why modern Christians who are consistent with the teaching of the Bible must observe the seventh-day Sabbath. I am convinced that it is of vital importance for Christian youth to show their allegiance to God by Sabbath observance.

Loyalty to a nation's ideals is expressed by obedience to its laws and by positive action which we call good citizenship. Allegiance to God is tested by our fidelity to His precepts and by our devotion to His will for us. Jesus said plainly, "If you really love Me, you will observe My commands." [1]

Our government levies taxes for its support on the earnings of its citizens; our Creator asks us for a seventh of the time that He has given to us. Six days of the week we may devote to our own interests; but the seventh day belongs to God, it is a day to worship Him.

The fourth commandment of the Decalogue specified that we are to remember the Sabbath, "for in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, and the sea, together with all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day; that is how the Lord came to bless the seventh day and to hallow it." [2]

Originating in the dawn of the world, the Sabbath comes to man from the Creator as a precious gift. Six days were consumed in creating the earth and the life that is upon it, and on the seventh day God rested. However, this was only the first step in making the memorial of creation. "God brought His work to an end," and then He "blessed the seventh day, and consecrated it, because on it He had desisted from all His work." [3] As long as the world stands, the Sabbath remains to commemorate its birth.

No other day has the blessing or sanction of the word of God. The Sabbath has continued unchanged through the passing millenniums. Astronomers affirm that not one second of time has been lost; thus, we can be assured that the seventh day comes to us unchanged from creation, the same day Jesus

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observed when He lived among men.

Is it necessary for me to keep the Sabbath? asked Fred, a junior in high school. "I've thought of it as a day for older people. We young folks don't need to rest!"

"But, Fred," I remonstrated, "the Sabbath isn't merely a time to catch up with one's sleep, or to rest physically so you can work all the harder for yourself on the other six days. The seventh day is to be a blessing as time dedicated to active, loving service honoring our Creator."

Too many of us are like Fred. We have looked upon the Sabbath from a negative rather than a positive point of view. But our relationship to this holy day is very important, for our allegiance to God centers in the proper observance of God's memorial. If we are sincere Christian youth we must believe in the inspiration of the Bible. We cannot deny the Genesis account of creation. The Sabbath celebrates that event. If we accept Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God we will follow His commands. He said, "The Sabbath was made for man," and He was a living example of how the seventh day can be made a blessing to others. He went about doing good on the Sabbath by comforting the oppressed and healing the sick. The Master summarized His true appreciation of the holy day in these words, "Therefore, it is right to do people good on the Sabbath." [4]

The law of God has never been abolished, and the Sabbath, a memorial of creation, has never been shifted from the seventh day to the first day of the week. Though we may study the New Testament with all diligence, we cannot find a single text which calls the first day of the week a holy day, and we can find no command for its observance nor any blessing pronounced upon it.

The disciples of Jesus Christ were careful in Sabbath keeping. They even postponed the final burial rites for their Lord after they had laid Him in the tomb, because the Sabbath was approaching and they did not want to desecrate the holy hours. Men they went to the tomb on Sunday morning, Jesus had arisen. Even as our Creator rested on the first Sabbath after making the world, so our Redeemer rested in Joseph's tomb when the redemption of man had been accomplished.

The change from the seventh to the first day of the week came about several centuries after Christ ascended into heaven. Church historians record how the shift was made by human decrees. The pagan day of the sun was gradually assimilated into the Christian religion until Sunday became the day of worship for the majority of church members. Leaders in the church declared that the new day of rest was observed in honor of the resurrection of the Lord; but God's word sanctions no such alteration. The seventh day is plainly called the "Sabbath of the Lord thy God," and it is not for weak, sinful man to disregard the divine monument.

In the prophecies of the book of Daniel the human power is revealed that in later times made the attempt to cast aside the divine command. The prophet wrote through inspiration these significant words:

"He shall speak words against the Most High,
And shall wear out the saints of the Most High;
He shall plan to change the sacred seasons and the law." [5]

The history of the church through the ages substantiates this prediction, and the ecclesiastical power admits that it has endeavored to make such a change of the Sabbath without the authority of the Scriptures.

With our minds enlightened concerning the conflict between truth and error, we may be on guard against paying homage to man rather than God. Placing our trust in the teachings of the Bible, we may make our decision as did the apostles, declaring, "We must obey God rather than men." [6]

Youth is invited to follow many human leaders. Waving banners of all colors are beckoning young men and women to pledge allegiance to the cause they represent. God calls Christian youth to follow the banner of Prince Emmanuel. The sign of allegiance is the Sabbath, for we read: "I gave them also My Sabbaths, as a sign between Me and them, that they might know that it was I the Lord that set them apart for Myself." [7]

The seventh-day Sabbath calls us to our Creator and Redeemer, it demands a preparation of heart and life to receive the blessing of the holy day. Solomon gave wise instruction in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes:

"Remember your Creator in the days of your vigor,
Before the evil days come,
And the years approach of which you will say, I have no pleasure in them." [8]

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Certainly this is a call for youth to remember God in the adventure of life, to show our loyalty to Him by honoring the memorial of creation.

There is buried treasure in the Sabbath waiting to be discovered by those who follow in the footsteps of their Master. This day is not to be a dismal, unhappy time when we hear the groans, "I dread to have Sabbath come," and "We can't do anything we enjoy." Too often the delight of the Sabbath has been crushed by a series of taboos. It is time for youth to search for ways to make the day of worship a period of happiness.

"I never knew what it was to enjoy the Sabbath until I started doing something for others, said the smiling girl as she returned from visiting children in the hospital. "We go every week now, and you should see how the little patients await our visits. We tell them Bible stories, sing them songs, and show them picture books. I would not miss these Sabbath afternoons for anything!"

All of this came from a girl who had found nothing in the Sabbath only six months ago. She had complained because she couldn't play the radio on Sabbath afternoon. She had been bored with the other activities of the home; but when she discovered the thrill of loving service, the Sabbath became a delight.

"When I went out into nature on the Sabbath I found beauty in the woods, the flowers, and the rivers that I had never seen before," a high-school student told me. I learned to study the birds, the rocks, and the trees; I began to look for wild animals. After I started these Sabbath afternoon walks, I could scarcely wait for the week to pass until I could go again. God seemed to be very close to me when I began looking at His handiwork."

This young man had told me how he spent his Sabbath afternoons before he made this discovery. With several chums he would drive around the town in the family car. "We never did anything bad, but we didn't do anything worth while either. The subjects we talked about were not particularly uplifting. I guess we just wasted our time while we waited for the sun to set."

The cobwebs which have filled the mind during the week of busy activities may be brushed aside when the Sabbath comes. Then we may find time for meditation, for relaxation from the tension of work or study. Nathaniel Hawthorne looked upon the day of rest in this way: "Doubts may flit around me, or seem to close their evil wings, and settle down. But, so long as I imagine that the earth is hallowed, and the light of heaven retains its sanctity, on the Sabbath-while that blessed sunshine lives within me-never can my soul have lost the instinct of its faith. If it has gone astray, it will return again." [9]

We require a Sabbath for physical, mental, and spiritual restoration. If we find God's blessing in the seventh day we shall find strength to meet the struggles of the week. The Sabbath is necessary to make a complete man. The Father was thinking of our greatest good when He gave us this holy day. He does not say, "Come apart and rest," but He invites us, "Come apart with Me and rest." This is the time when our thoughts may be molded by the mind of the Master. On this day there is opportunity for the soul to grow. Too long we have waited on the barren plains of materialism and sordid selfishness; the Father calls us to the green pastures of spiritual blessing.

If we cannot find delight in the Sabbath in this life, we would never enjoy the new earth, for in that perfect home "from new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord." [10]

Youth must possess the blessing of the Sabbath to maintain a life with God in this tumultuous age. In contrast to the greed and the restlessness, the clutching after those things that crumble in the hands, there is certainty and hope in God's love. Our wars and desolation, our disillusion and cynicism, have overwhelmed men without God. The seventh-day Sabbath restores our faith, revives our courage, and keeps before us the everlasting memorial of creation and of that future day when our Redeemer shall make all things new.

Our allegiance is tested in our attitude toward God's monument of creation. "There is no religion without worship," says one, "and there is no worship without the Sabbath." The magnet that draws us to the Father is His eternal love, and that love is manifest to teach each individual. Can we not rejoice in heaven's greatest gift on the day which God has blessed?

"This is the day that the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad therein!" [11]

If a millionaire gave you a magnificent estate and told you that every luxury it possessed was your own, what would you do? How would you feel to know that the gardens, the swimming pool, the tennis courts, the spacious house, and all of its furnishings would be your heritage? Only one stipulation would be made by the giver. He would say, "I have built and furnished this estate for you, I place it all in your hands

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to keep and use as you desire. I make only one request: Will you welcome me one day a week as your guest, and give me that much of your time?"

Could we be so ungrateful that we would refuse the gift and the love bestowed upon us? This is what the heavenly Father has offered us. He gives us life and all our possessions. With these benefits He makes a request, He asks for one seventh of our time. Shall we refuse God's love? Shall we selfishly preoccupy the sacred time that we might spend in communion with our Lord? May we acknowledge the divine claims, and with joy and reverence make the Sabbath the richest experience of life.