

"The First Sabbath"

The Present Truth – February 8, 1894

E. J. Waggoner

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Ex. 20:8-10.

We have learned that on the sixth day God formed the beasts and creeping things, and man and woman, and that He planted the Garden of Eden. The work of creating things was now finished. In six short days the Lord had made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is; and "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." [Gen. 1:31] Surely "among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord; neither in the works like unto Thy works. . . . Thou art great, and doest wondrous things; Thou art God alone." Ps. 86:8, 10. "For all the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens." Ps. 96:5.

Could man ever forget such a God? It does not seem possible. But God, in His wisdom, saw that men would be tempted to forget Him as the One who gave them all their strength, and power to do right, and He knew that if they did thus forget Him they would learn to trust in the other gods that could not help them, and they would then become wicked and unhappy, and finally be destroyed. He knew that without Jesus no one could be good, or truly happy. God so loved the beings whom He had created that He wanted them always to live and be as good and happy as they then were. He therefore made and gave them something to remember Him and His wonderful works by;—something beautiful, pure, and good; something that would follow them to any part of the earth, and that would present itself to them fresh and new every few days. What a strangely beautiful gift it must be! Look in the second chapter of your Bible and you will find what it is, and how it was made.

It says that the works of creation were all finished, so that instead of working on the seventh day when it came, God rested from all His work which He had created and made. Verses 1-3. God did not rest because He was tired (Isa. 40:28), but because He wanted to make the seventh day into a Sabbath or rest-day for man,—not that man's body might get rest, but that his heart might have time to drink in new strength to do right, and might receive special help and refreshing in the presence of Jesus. This Sabbath was a wonderful gift that He was going to give man to remember Him by.

Instead of calling the next day after the seventh the eighth day, and the one after that the ninth, and so on, they were to begin all over again, calling the next day after the seventh the first day, and the one after that the second, and so on, until they counted seven again. This they were to do all the time. Every time the seventh day came it was to be the Sabbath to remind them of their God, and of His wonderful works for them,—a sign of what He was able to do for them every day. In this way, you see, they would be strongly reminded of Him again and again every few days. As they were to call every seven days a week, the Sabbath, therefore, would come upon the last day of every week.

After God had rested upon the seventh day, He put a special blessing upon it such as He did not put upon any other day in the week, and He sanctified, or made it holy, by putting His

own life and presence into it. (He is so holy and good that His very presence makes a place holy. Ex. 3:1-5; Josh. 5:13-15.) The Sabbath, therefore, was made to be the glory of the whole week, the holiest of all, set apart and appointed for the special dwelling-place of God, and for a special blessing to man. But whoever should dare to enter it with sinful hearts or their own works would pollute it and bring a curse upon themselves as surely as did the priest who bought and sold in God's temple in Jerusalem. God therefore told man to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

That all might know just when it begins and ends, the Lord says it is to be kept from "even to even" (Lev. 23:32), from the going down of the sun to the going down of the sun. Deut. 16:6.

Men now call the first day of the week Sunday, the second day Monday, the third day Tuesday, the fourth Wednesday, the fifth Thursday, the sixth Friday, and the seventh Saturday. But God gave a name to the seventh day Saturday. He named it His holy Sabbath day.

The Sabbath was made not only for Adam, but for "man" (Mark 2:27), and that means all men. It was made for even little children like you, for we read in Ex. 20:10: "In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." You see it is for us all. How we ought to praise God for His wonderful token of remembrance! We cannot lay it away and forget to take it with us, for it comes to us every week, no matter where we may be.

And this is what the Sabbath says to you every time it comes: "I come with a message from God; He says to you, 'Think of Me.' I still love you as I did when I created man in Eden. I am just as strong and wise as I was then, and as able to care for, and help you to do right. I am willing to use all of My power to help you if you want it. Col. 1:11. Look around you and see how powerful I am. I still uphold the shining worlds above, and cause the grass and flowers and trees to grow; I care for the beasts, and scatter food for the tiniest creatures that I have made. If you use the Sabbath day in not doing your own ways, or finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, and call it a delight, you will delight yourself in Me, for I am in it; and I will bless you greatly. Isa. 58:13. You then cannot forget Me and worship idols, for My Sabbath will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God, who can save you from sin and death." Ezek. 20:12, 20.

It will always be true that God created the heavens and the earth, that He is as powerful now to help us as He was then. Since there will never be a time when we do not need to remember this, there will therefore never be a time when Jesus will not want us to keep the Sabbath.

We read that those who keep it faithfully here and love God with all their hearts will finally live on the new earth; and even then they will come together every Sabbath to worship the Lord. Isa. 66:22, 23. Dear child, you may be among that happy company if you now take Jesus for your best Friend, and now remember His Sabbath day to keep it holy.

1. In how many days did God create the heavens and earth and all things therein? Ex. 20:11.
2. Has any other being ever done such a wonderful thing?

3. Who alone can create?—The One who made the heavens and earth.
4. Then what must He be?—The only true God.
5. How many days are there in a week?
6. What did God do on the seventh day? Gen. 2:2.
7. Was He tired? Then why did He rest?
8. What did He do to the day after He had rested upon it? Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:11.
9. What only can make a place or thing holy? Ex. 3:1-5; Josh. 5:13-15.
10. Why did God give a Sabbath day to man? Ezek. 20:12.
11. Why did He want man to remember Him and His great power?
12. Why would a day help him to remember God better than some other gift?
13. How often would it search him out and present itself to him?
14. Was Adam the only man who should keep the Sabbath holy?
15. Name over a few of those to whom He has given this precious token of remembrance. Ex. 20:10.
16. Do little ones like you need to keep His Sabbath that you may remember Him and love Him as you ought?
17. Which day of the week is the Sabbath? Ex. 20:8-10.
18. How can we know just when to stop our work and play and begin to keep it?
19. How can we know when it is at an end? Deut. 16:6.
20. How much of the Sabbath is holy? And how much does God say we are to keep holy?
21. How, then, do you suppose it makes God feel when He sees us neglect to get ready for the Sabbath in time, and work a little while after the Sabbath begins? And how when we begin our work again before the sun is down in the evening?
22. What does the Sabbath say to you every time it comes?
23. Why should it make us love God and be glad when we think of His great power, and that He is willing to be our Friend?
24. If we love the Sabbath and use it as God says, what does He promise us? Isa. 56:2; 58:13, 14.
25. How long will it be true that God created the heavens and the earth in six days?
26. How long will we need to remember God and His great power?

27. Then how long does Jesus want us to keep the Sabbath?