

# NOTES ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

Copyright © 1878

## CHAPTER TWO

THIS chapter introduces to our notice two prominent subjects, namely, “**the seventh day**” and “**the river.**”

The first of these demands special attention.

There are few subjects on which so much misunderstanding and contradiction prevails as the doctrine of “**the Sabbath.**” Not that there is the slightest foundation for either the one or the other; for the whole subject is laid down in the Word, in the simplest possible manner.

The distinct commandment, to “**keep holy the Sabbath-day,**” will come before us, the Lord permitting, in our meditations on the book of Exodus.

In the chapter now before us, there is no command given to man whatever; but simply the record that, “**God rested on the seventh day.**” “**Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And 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. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.**”

There is no commandment given to man. here.

We are simply told that God enjoyed his rest, because all was done, so far as the mere creation was concerned. there was nothing more to be done, and, therefore, the One who had, during six days, been working, ceased to work, and enjoyed his rest. All was complete; all was very good; all was just as he himself had made it; and he rested in it. “**The morning stars sang together; and all the sons of God shouted for joy,**”

The work of creation was ended, and God was celebrating a Sabbath. And be it observed, that this is the true character of a Sabbath. This is the only Sabbath which God ever celebrated, so far as the inspired record instructs us. After this, we read of God’s commanding man to keep the Sabbath, and man utterly failing so to do; but we never read again the words, “**God rested:**” on the contrary, the word is, “**My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.**” (John 5:17).

The Sabbath, in the strict and proper sense of the term, could only be celebrated when there really was nothing to be done. It could only be celebrated amid an undefiled creation,- a creation on which no spot of sin could be discerned. God can have no rest where there is sin; and one has only to look around him in order to learn the total impossibility of God's enjoying a rest in creation now. The thorn and the thistle together with the ten thousand other melancholy and humiliating fruits of a groaning creation rise before us, and declare that God must be at work and not at rest.

Could God rest in the midst of thorns and briars? Could he rest amid the sighs and tears, the groans and sorrows, the sickness and death, the degradation and guilt of a ruined world? Could God sit down, as it were, and celebrate a Sabbath in the midst of such circumstances?

Whatever answer may be given to these questions, the Word of God teaches us that God has had no Sabbath, as yet, save the one which the second of Genesis records. "**The seventh day**," and none other, was the Sabbath. It showed forth the completeness of creation-work; but creation-work is marred, and the seventh-day rest interrupted; and thus, from the fall to the incarnation, God was working; from the incarnation to the Cross, God the Son was working; and from Pentecost until now, God the Holy Ghost has been working. Assuredly, Christ had no Sabbath when he was upon this earth.

True, he finished his work, -blessedly, gloriously finished it,- but where did he spend the Sabbath-day? In the tomb! Yes, my reader, the Lord Christ, God manifest in the flesh, the Lord of the Sabbath, the maker and sustainer of Heaven and earth, spent the seventh day in the dark and silent tomb. Has this no voice for us? Does it convey no teaching? Could the Son of God lie in the grave on the seventh day, if that day were to be spent in rest and peace; and in the full sense that nothing remained to be done? Impossible! We want no further proof of the impossibility of celebrating a Sabbath than that which is afforded at the grave of Jesus.

We may stand beside that grave amazed to find it occupied by such an one on the seventh day; but, oh! the reason is obvious, Man is a fallen, ruined, guilty creature. His long career of guilt has ended in crucifying the Lord of glory; and not only crucifying him, but placing a great stone at the mouth of the tomb, to prevent, if possible, his leaving it.

And what was man doing while the Son of God was in the grave? He was observing the Sabbath day! What a thought! Christ in his grave to repair a broken Sabbath, and yet man attempting to keep the Sabbath as though it were not broken at all! It was man's Sabbath, and not God's. It was a Sabbath without Christ, an empty, powerless, worthless, because Christless and Godless, form.

But some will say, "the day has been changed, while all the principles belonging to it remain the same."

I do not believe that Scripture furnishes any foundation for such an idea. Where is the divine warrant for such a statement? Surely if there is Scripture authority, nothing can be easier than to produce it. But the fact is, there is none; on the contrary, the distinction is most fully maintained in the New Testament.

Take one remarkable passage, in proof: "**In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.**" (Matthew 28:1).

There is, evidently, no mention here of the seventh day being changed to the first day; nor yet of any transfer of the Sabbath from the one to the other.

The first day of the week is not the Sabbath changed, but altogether a new day. It is the first day of a new period, and not the last day of an old. The seventh day stands connected with earth and earthly rest: the first day of the week, on the contrary, introduces us to Heaven and heavenly rest.

This makes a vast difference in the principle; and when we look at the matter in a practical point of view, the difference is most material. If I celebrate the seventh day, it marks me as an earthly man, inasmuch as that day is, clearly, the rest of earth-creation-rest; but if I am taught by the Word and Spirit of God to understand the meaning of the first day of the week, I shall at once apprehend its immediate connection with that new and heavenly order of things, of which the death and resurrection of Christ form the everlasting foundation.

The seventh day appertained to Israel and to earth. The first day of the week appertains to the Church and to Heaven. Further, Israel was commanded to observe the Sabbath day; the Church is privileged to enjoy the first day of the week. The former was the test of Israel's moral condition; the latter is the significant proof of the Church's eternal acceptance. That made manifest what Israel could do for God; this perfectly declares what God has done for us.

It is quite impossible to over-estimate the value and importance of the Lord's day, as the first day of the week is termed, in the first chapter of the Apocalypse. Being the day on which Christ rose from the dead, it sets forth not the completion of creation, but the full and glorious triumph of redemption. Nor should we regard the celebration of the first day of the week as a matter of bondage, or as a yoke put on the neck of a Christian. It is his delight to celebrate that happy day. Hence we find that the first day of the week was pre-eminently the day on which the early Christians came together to break bread; and at that period of the Church's history, the distinction between the Sabbath and the first day of the week was fully maintained.

The Jews celebrated the former, by assembling in their synagogues to read "**the law and the prophets;**" the Christians celebrated the latter, by assembling to break bread. There is not so much as a single passage of Scripture in which the first day of the week is called the Sabbath day; whereas there is the most abundant proof of their entire distinctness.

Why, therefore, contend for that which has no foundation in the Word?

Love, honor, and celebrate the Lord's day as much as possible; seek, like the apostle, to be "**in the Spirit**" thereon; let your retirement from secular matters be as profound as ever you can make it; but while you do all this, call it by its proper name; give it its proper place; understand its proper principles; attach to it its proper characteristics; and, above all, do not bind down the Christian, as with an iron rule, to observe the seventh day, when it is his high and holy privilege to observe the first.

- Do not bring him down from Heaven, where he can rest, to a cursed and blood-stained earth, where he cannot.
- Do not ask him to keep a day which his Master spent in the tomb, instead of that blessed day on which He left it.

(See, carefully, Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19,26; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10; Acts 13:14; 17:2; Colossians 2:16).

But let it not be supposed that we lose sight of the important fact that the Sabbath will again be celebrated, in the land of Israel, and over the whole creation. It assuredly will. "**There remaineth a rest for the people of God.**" (Hebrews 4:9).

When the Son of Abraham, Son of David, and Son of Man, shall assume his position of government over the whole earth, there will be a glorious Sabbath,- a rest which sin shall never interrupt. But now, he is rejected, and all who know and love him are called to take their place with him in his rejection; they are called to "**go forth to him without the camp bearing his reproach**" (Hebrews 13:13).

If earth could keep a Sabbath, there would be no reproach; but the very fact of the professing church's seeking to make the first day of the week the Sabbath, reveals a deep principle. It is but the effort to get back to an earthly standing, and to an earthly code of morals. Many may not see this.

Many true Christians may, most conscientiously, observe the Sabbath day, as such; and we are bound to honor their consciences, though we are perfectly warranted in asking them to furnish a scriptural basis for their conscientious convictions. We would not stumble or wound their conscience, but we would seek to instruct it. However, we are not now occupied with conscience or its convictions, but only with the principle which lies at the root of what may be termed the Sabbath question; and I would only put the question to the Christian reader, which is mort: consonant with the entire scope and spirit of the New Testament, the celebration of the seventh day or Sabbath, or the celebration of the first day of the week or the Lord's day? \*

\* This subject will, if the Lord permit, come before us again in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; but I would, here, observe, that very much of the offence and misunderstanding connected with the important subject of the Sabbath, may be justly traced to the inconsiderate and injudicious conduct of some who, in their zeal for what they termed Christian liberty, in reference to the Sabbath, rather lose sight of the claim of honest consciences; and also of the place which the Lord's day occupies in the New Testament. Some have been known to enter on their weekly avocations, simply to show their liberty, and thus they caused much needless offence. Such acting could never have been suggested by the Spirit of Christ. If I am ever so clear and free in own mind, I should respect the consciences of my brethren; and, moreover. I do not believe that those who so carry themselves, really understand the true and precious privileges connected with the Lord 's Day. We should only be too thankful to be rid of all secular occupation and distraction, to think of having recourse to them for the purpose of showing our liberty.

The good providence of our God has so arranged for his people throughout the British Empire that they can, without pecuniary loss, enjoy the rest of the Lord's day, inasmuch as all are obliged to abstain from business. This must be regarded by every well-regulated mind as a mercy; for, if it were not thus ordered, we know how man's covetous heart would, if possible, rob the Christian of the sweet privilege of attending the assembly on the Lord's day. And who can tell what would be the deadening effect of uninterrupted engagement with this world's traffic? Those Christians who, from Monday morning to Saturday night, breathe the dense atmosphere of the mart, the market, and the manufactory, can form some idea of it.

It cannot be regarded as a good sign to find men introducing measures for the public profanation of the Lord's day. It assuredly marks the progress of infidelity and French influence.

But there are some who teach that the expression, "the Lord's day," refers to "the day of the Lord," and that the exiled apostle found himself carried forward, as it were, into the Spirit of the day of the Lord. I do not believe the language would bear such an interpretation; and, besides, we have in I Thessalonians 5:2, and II Peter 3:10, the exact words, "the day of the Lord". This entirely settles the matter, so far as the mere criticism is concerned; and as to interpretation, it is plain that by far the greater portion of the Apocalypse is occupied, not with "the day of the Lord," but with events prior thereto.

*We shall now consider the connection between the Sabbath, and the river flowing out of Eden.*

There is much interest in this.

It is the first notice we get of "**the river of God**," which is, here, introduced in connection with God's rest. When God was resting in His works, the whole world felt the blessing and refreshment thereof. It was impossible for God to keep a Sabbath, and earth not to feel its sacred influence. But, alas! the streams which flowed forth from Eden - the scene of earthly rest - were speedily interrupted because the rest of creation was marred by sin.

Yet, blessed be God, sin did not put a stop to his activities, but only gave them a new sphere; and wherever He is seen acting, the river is seen flowing.

Thus, when we find him, with a strong hand, and an outstretched arm, conducting His ransomed hosts across the sterile sand of the desert, there we see the stream flowing forth, not from Eden, but from the smitten Rock, - apt and beautiful expression of the ground on which sovereign grace ministers to the need of sinners! This was redemption, and not merely creation.

"**That rock was Christ**," Christ smitten to meet his people's need. The smitten Rock was connected with the Lord's place in the tabernacle; and truly there was moral beauty in the connection. God dwelling in curtains, and Israel drinking from a smitten rock, had a voice for every opened ear, and a deep lesson for every circumcised heart. (Exodus 17:6).

Passing onward, in the history of God's ways, we find the river flowing in another channel.

**“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”** (John 7:37, 38).

Here, then, we find the river emanating from another source, and flowing through another channel; though, in one sense, the source of the river was ever the same, being God himself; but, then, it was God, known in a new relationship and upon a new principle. Thus in the passage just quoted, the Lord Jesus was taking His place in spirit, outside of the whole existing order of things, and presenting Himself as the source of the river of living water, of which river the person of the believer was to be the channel.

Eden, of old, was constituted a debtor to the whole earth, to send forth the fertilizing streams. And in the desert, the rock, when smitten, became a debtor to Israel’s thirsty hosts. Just so, now, every one who believes in Jesus, is a debtor to the scene around him, to allow the streams of refreshment to flow forth from him.

The Christian should regard himself as the channel through which the manifold grace of Christ may flow out to a needy world; and the more freely he communicates, the more freely will he receive, **“for there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.”**

This places the believer in a place of sweetest privileges, and, at the same time, of the most solemn responsibility. He is called to be the constant witness and exhibiter of the grace of him on whom he believes. Now, the more he enters into the privilege, the more will he answer the responsibility. If he is habitually feeding upon Christ, he cannot avoid exhibiting Him. The more the Holy Spirit keeps the Christian’s eye fixed on Jesus, the more will his heart be occupied with his adorable Person, and his life and character bear unequivocal testimony to his grace.

Faith is, at once, the power of ministry, the power of testimony, and the power of worship. If we are not living **“by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us,”** we shall neither be effectual servants, faithful witnesses, nor true worshippers.

- We may be doing a great deal; but it will not be service to Christ.
- We may be saying a great deal, but it will not be testimony for Christ.
- We may exhibit a great deal of piety and devotion; but it will not be spiritual and true worship.

Finally, we have the river of God, presented to us in the last chapter of the Apocalypse. **“And he showed me a pure river of water of life: clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”** (Compare, also, Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Zechariah 14:8). **“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.”**

This is the last place in which we find the river. Its source can never again be touched, its channel never again interrupted.

“**The throne of God**” is expressive of eternal stability; and the presence of the Lamb marks it as based upon the immediate ground of accomplished redemption. It is not God’s throne in creation, nor in providence: but in redemption. When I see the Lamb, I know its connection With me as a sinner.

“**The throne of God**,” as such, would but deter me; but when God reveals himself in the Person of the Lamb, the heart is attracted, and the conscience tranquillized.

The blood of the Lamb cleanses the conscience from every speck and stain of sin, and sets it, in perfect freedom, in the presence of a holiness which cannot tolerate sin.

In the Cross, all the claims of divine holiness were perfectly answered; so that the more I understand the latter, the more I appreciate the former.

The higher our estimate of holiness, the higher will be our estimate of the work of the Cross.  
**“Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Hence the Psalmist calls on the saints to give thanks at the remembrance of God’s holiness. This is a precious fruit of a perfect redemption. Before ever a sinner can give thanks at the remembrance of God’s holiness, he must look at it by faith, from the resurrection side of the Cross.

*Having thus traced the river, from Genesis to Revelation, we shall briefly look at Adam’s position in Eden.*

We have seen him as a type of Christ; but he is not merely to be viewed typically, but personally; not merely as absolutely shadowing forth “**the second man, the Lord from heaven,**” but also as standing in the place of personal responsibility.

In the midst of the fair scene of creation, the Lord God set up a testimony, and this testimony was also a test for the creature. It spoke of death in the midst of life. “**In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.**” Strange, solemn sound ! Yet, it was a needed sound. Adam’s life was suspended upon his strict obedience. The link which connected him with the Lord God\* was obedience, based on implicit confidence in the One who had set him in his position of dignity - confidence in His truth - confidence in His love. He could obey only while he confided.

We shall see the truth and force of this more fully when we come to examine the next chapter.

\* “**My reader will observe the change in the second chapter from the expression “God” to “Lord God” There is much importance in the distinction . When God is seen acting in relation with man, he takes the title “Lord God,” - (Jehovah Elohim;) but until man appears on the scene, the word “Lord” is not used. I shall just point out three out of many passages in which the distinction is very strikingly presented.**

**“And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God, [Elohim] had commanded him; and the Lord (Jehovah) shut him in.”** (Genesis 7:16). Elohim was going to destroy the world which He had made; but Jehovah took care of the man with whom He stood in relation. Again, “that, all the earth may know that there is a God (Elohim) in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord (Jehovah) saveth,” &c. (I Samuel 17:46, 47). All the earth was to recognize the presence of Elohim; but Israel was called to recognize the actings of the Lord, with whom they stood in relation. Lastly, “**Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord (Jehovah) helped him, and God (Elohim) moved them to depart from him.**” (II Chronicles 18:31). **the Lord took care of his poor erring servant; but Elohim, though unknown, acted upon the hearts of the uncircumcised Syrians.**

I would here suggest to my reader the remarkable contrast between the testimony set up in Eden, and that which is set up now. Then, when all around was life, God spoke of death; now, on the contrary, when all around is death, God speaks of life; then the word was, **“in the day thou eatest thou shalt die;”** now the word is, **“believe and live.”** And, as in Eden, the enemy sought to make void God’s testimony, as to the result of eating the fruit; so now, he seeks to make void God’s testimony as to the result of believing the Gospel.

God had said, **“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”** But the serpent said, **“Ye shall not surely die.”**

And now, when God’s word plainly declares that **“he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,”** (John 3:36,) the same serpent seeks to persuade people that they have not everlasting life, nor should they presume to think of such a thing, until they have, first, done, felt, and experienced all manner of things.

My beloved reader, if you have not yet heartily believed the divine record, let me beseech you to allow **“the voice of the Lord”** to prevail above the hiss of the serpent. **“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”** (John 5:24).

~ end of chapter 2 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>

\*\*\*