

# THE CHRISTIAN.

"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."— Paul.

Vol. III.—No. 7.

SAINT JOHN, N. B., MAY, 1886.

Whole No. 31.

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### IS THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT BINDING UPON US AS CHRISTIANS?

This question is one of no ordinary importance, and admits of a wide range of inquiry and argument. It is a fact that the Christian world to-day, by its practice, is answering this question in the negative, for instead of remembering the "Sabbath day to keep it holy, they are keeping the *first day of the week*, or Lord's day. The authority for keeping the Sabbath is found in the Decalogue, or ten commandments of the law. If we are yet under this law, then is the fourth commandment still binding upon us. But if it can be shown that the "ministration of death, written and engraven upon stones," has given place to a more glorious ministration, in which there is no commandment to keep the Sabbath; then do we conclude that we are not, as Christians, under the law given by Moses, which law contained the Sabbath, but rather under the law of grace and truth, given by Jesus Christ, which law knows nothing of the obligations of the Jewish Sabbath.

Some people suppose that the Sabbath was observed by divine authority before the flood and by the patriarchs since up to the time of the giving of the law; but those who speak only as the Word of God speaks, will be slow to receive it. There is certainly no intimation given in the Old Testament to warrant this opinion. It is said of Abraham that he "taught his household and children after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment." (Gen. xviii. 19.) If the observance of the Sabbath was then a statute and an ordinance, Abraham would certainly have spoken of it to his family; and some evidence would have been given of its observance during the four hundred years between Abraham and the giving of the Law. But in the absence of any such evidence we are bound to conclude that till God spoke to the children of Israel by Moses, the world knew nothing concerning the observance of the Sabbath-day.

It was revealed to Moses when he wrote the history of the creation, that when God had ended His work on the seventh day He rested from all His work which He had made, and sanctified it. But there is not so much as a hint that its observance was then enjoined upon man. The first intimation we have of such an obligation is found in Ex. xvi. 23. This brings us down through more than two thousand years of the world's history. Here, when the children of Israel had been brought up out of Egypt, and God is about to give them manna to eat, He instructs Moses to command them to keep the Sabbath. Hence the force of this Scripture. "This is that which the Lord hath said." The Lord had evidently instructed Moses both as to the giving of the manna, and to

the time of gathering it. Moses took nothing upon himself, but only spoke to the children of Israel as the Lord spoke to him.

Again it will be seen that not only was the world ignorant of the Sabbath till Moses gave it to the children of Israel, as recorded in Ex. xvi. 23; but even then it was given to the children of Israel only. In proof of this we call special attention to the following passages of Scripture: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever." (Ex. xxxi. 12-17). Read also Ezek. xx. 12-14, and Neh. ix. 13-14. In these and other passages God is said to have made *known* to the Jews, or the children of Israel, the Sabbath, and to have given it to *them* for special purposes, and for reasons exclusively belonging to them as a people. Because He "had led them in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire," and "had come down upon Mount Sinai," and "spoke unto them from heaven," and "gave them right judgments and true laws," so had He given them His holy Sabbath.

In no respect can these reasons be assigned to any other people. From Deut. v. 15 we read: "And remember 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." In this scripture it is expressly declared that the reason the Lord had commanded them to keep the Sabbath was because He had brought them up out of the land of Egypt. From these scriptures, and others that might be produced, it is evident that the Sabbath was given only to the Jews, and for their use exclusively.

We shall now show that even that law is done away, and that the law of Christ, which embraces all men, is given in its stead. The law containing the Sabbath was "written and engraven in stones." The advocate of the seventh-day worship goes at once to the Ten Commandments for his authority. It only remains then to show that this "ministration of death" containing the Sabbath has been "abolished," and the "ministration of the Spirit," which is more glorious, and which contains nothing concerning the Sabbath, now "remaineth." The writings of the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 6-17, is so clear on this point that it is difficult to see how any one can fail to understand him.

It is claimed by some that there are two laws. One they call the law of God, and the other the law of Moses. The latter they admit is done away; but the former, which they claim, contains the Sabbath, still remains. The law of the Ten Commandments they call the law of God; while the law of Moses is made to mean the law of circum-

cision and sacrifices. But it can be easily shown that neither circumcision nor sacrifices was of Moses; for circumcision was four hundred and thirty years older than the law given by Moses; and sacrifice was as old almost as the human race. Again, the same book, meaning "the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses," is sometimes called the law of God, and sometimes the law of Moses, and very frequently spoken of simply as *the law*. In the book of Neh. viii. 1-8, we have the same book spoken of as above. In this short space it is called "the law of Moses," "the law of God," and "the law." Many other scriptures of this kind might be given, but this is enough to make clear what we have stated.

Again from Acts xv. we learn that certain of "the Pharisees which believed" went out among the Gentile brethren and "troubled" them with words, subverting their souls, "saying, ye must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment." It was not the law of circumcision only that is here set aside, but the "law of Moses" as well; and it has already been shown that the "law of Moses," the "law of God," and "the law," all refer to the one book, or to the one law given by God to Moses for the instruction and government of the children of Israel. Christ came into the world not to destroy the law, but "to fulfil it," which he did, and "took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." (Col. ii. 14.) In his letter to the Galatians the Apostle Paul shows clearly that this law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai was only added to the promise that he had made to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before, and this "because of the transgression," and that only "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." (Gal. iii. 19.) This law was the school-master to bring the Jews to Christ, but after He came Paul says, "We are no longer under a school-master." (Gal. iii. 25).

In harmony with this is the teaching of the Apostle in his letter to the Romans. In this epistle, as also in that to the Galatians, Paul shows that the law under which they had been living, or the husband to whom they had been married, was dead, and they were free now "to be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead." (Rom. vii. 3-4). Let it not be said that the Apostle is speaking here of the ceremonial law, or law of circumcision, for it is the law which says "Thou shalt not covet," of which he is speaking. "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Rom. vii. 7.) To the Corinthians the same Apostle writes and speaks of the same law, calling it "the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones." (2 Cor. iii. 7). This was none other than the Ten Commandments. It is called "the ministration of death," and of "con-