



A Sabbath well kept

WHAT APPEARS to be the will of God about the manner of keeping the Sabbath Day? There are two general rules laid down in Scripture for our guidance, and by them all questions must be decided.

One plain rule about the Sabbath is, that *it must be kept as a day of rest.* All work of every kind ought to cease as far as possible,

both of body and mind. "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." Works of necessity and mercy may be done. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us this, and teaches also that all such works were allowable in the Old Testament times. "Have ye not read." He says, "what David did?" "Have ye not read . . . how the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" (Matthew 12:5) Whatever is necessary to preserve and maintain life, whether of ourselves, or of the creatures, or to do good to the souls of men, may be done on the Sabbath Day without sin.

The other great rule about the Sabbath is, that *it must be kept holy*. Our rest is not to be the rest of a beast, like that of the ox and the ass, which have neither mind nor soul. It is not to be a carnal, sensual rest, like that of the worshippers of the golden calf, who "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play". It is to be emphatically a holy rest. It is to be a rest in which, as far as possible, the affairs of the soul may be attended to, the business of the world to come minded, and communion with God and Christ kept up. In short, it ought never to be forgotten that it is "the Sabbath of the Lord our God". (Exodus 20:10).

I can well believe that many will think I am setting the standard of Sabbath observance far too high. The thoughtless

and worldly, the lovers of money and lovers of pleasure will all exclaim that I am requiring what is impossible. It is easy to make such assertions. The only question for a Christian ought to be, "What does the Bible teach?" God's measure of what is right must surely not be brought down to the measure of man. Man's measure should rather be brought up to the measure of God.

I want no other standard of Sabbath observance than that which is laid down in the Fourth Commandment. I want neither more nor less. It is a rule which has been sanctioned by all the best and holiest Christians of every Church and nation.

Not least, I want no other standard of Sabbath observance than that to which a calm reflection on things yet to come will lead every sober-minded person. Are we really going to die one day and leave this world? Are we about to appear before God in another state of existence? Have we any hope that we are about to spend an endless eternity in God's immediate presence? Are these things so, or are they not? Surely, if they are, it is not too much to ask men to give one day in seven to God.

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A sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content
And strength for the toils of the morrow
But a Sabbath profaned
Whate'er may be gained
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow

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