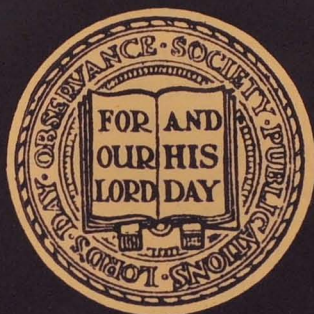


Blessed
and
Sanctified



by Leith Samuel, B.A.

BLESSED AND SANCTIFIED

"And God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good and the evening and the morning were the sixth 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 blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because in that day He had rested from all His work which God created and made".—Genesis 1, 31; 2, 1-3.

Divine Ordinance

The first thing we learn from these verses is that the observing of a day of rest is not something that is a matter of human utility, "a wise thing to do", or human prudence, "an intelligent thing to do", but rather the basis of it is a *divine ordinance*. God blesses the seventh day and sanctifies it. Here is divine appointment—not just human desirability. It is from the animal point of view exceedingly desirable. My father used to work, years and years ago, in a Corporation where there were horse trams and he could always tell a horse that had been working seven days a week. So could anybody who knew anything about them. One day of rest was needed for the animal at work. One day of rest is needed for the "human animal", but that is not the basis upon which the day of rest is set before us. No matter how desirable physiologically, that is not *the basis*. It is a divine ordinance. "Six days shalt thou labour and do

all that thou hast to do, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God". Moses did not introduce this; all Moses did was to endorse it. This is not something for Israel only; this is something for all mankind. This is not introduced to the chosen race by Moses as an innovation exclusively for them, *i.e.*, "You must observe one day in seven". The chosen race is told to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Remember it has already been instituted long before Moses opens his mouth to Israel. Genesis Chapter 2, verse 3. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. If you read on through Exodus you find in Chapter 16 that there is a very clear reference to a cycle of a week. We find in Verse 21 that "they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot it melted. And it came to pass that on the sixth day, they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord. Bake that which ye will bake today and seethe that ye will seeth; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning". "Tomorrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord". And then in Chapter 20, we find, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy". But don't imagine it was inaugurated or introduced in Exodus 20. Here it is set before us very clearly as something that is to be observed for all men at all times—Exodus 16, Verse 23. And the basis of it, "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it". This is a *divine ordinance*.

Definite Day

This is also a *definite day*—one in seven. Not one in eight or nine or ten. During the French Revolution, they thought "Ten days make a better cycle than seven. Let us have nine days' work and then one day off. It will work out with people that way anyway. Let's do that". So they tried it. But it didn't work. Indeed, the Minister of Religion in the Revolution went to Monsieur Tallyrand,

who had been a Bishop until he caught on with the idea of revolution and turned his back on the church, and he said, "You know I cannot get them to observe this one day in ten. They keep going back to their Sunday. What shall I do? I cannot get them to observe my new religious ideas, they keep going back to the Christian ideas. What *shall* I do?" And Tallyrand said, "It is quite simple, my dear fellow. You get yourself crucified and get yourself raised again from the dead on the third day and you will be able to get across to them anything you like". But the minister of religion went away feeling that that wasn't quite the answer for him! "Six days shalt thou labour. The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God"—a definite day—the seventh day.

You may ask, "Why is it that Christians do not observe the seventh day of the week?" Why? Because on the first day of the week our Lord rose from the dead. On the first day He visited His disciples and accepted their worship. On the first day of the week Thomas, who was not with them a week ago, finds the Lord himself and joins in the disciples' worship. On the first day of the week, the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came with power, to knit together a body of individuals into a corporate unity that was absolutely on fire for God. We read in Acts 20, Verse 7, that "on the first day of the week the disciples were come together to break bread". We read in 1 Corinthians 16, Verse 2, "On the first day of the week let everyone of you lay aside as the Lord has prospered him". The first day of the week. In other words—for us Christians the one day in seven (and the important thing physiologically is one day in seven) to be observed for a multitude of spiritual reasons is the first day of the week.

We find right from the earliest day of church history that it was on the first day of the week that the disciples met to sing praises to Jesus as God, and to vow themselves to do no evil but to do nothing but good in this dark world in which they were living. And one witness after another rises—Pliny in his letters to the Emperor Trajan

and various Christian writers have told us that the first day of the week was the great day of worship. It very quickly took the place of the seventh day of the week in the Christian's cycle of living. The first day, then, is for us the definite day to observe as the day of worship and the day of rest. You may say,—“All days are the same”. Paul shows us, in Romans 14, Verses 5 and 6, that there is a sense in which all days are the same. But Paul does not annul Genesis 2, Verse 3, when he tells us that one man observes the day unto the Lord and another man does not observe the day, and it is unto the Lord that they either do it or they do not do it. *Paul has not in mind the one day in seven.* What he does have in mind is a multitudinous calendar with masses of days that all sorts of people are observing—some better than others—and he says . . . “All that is now to be laid aside”, and when Colossians is written he says, “Don't you lean on day-observing for salvation. This is not the way of salvation. Only in Christ is there salvation”. But again he is not putting or brushing aside *the day of rest*. Feast days, high days, festivals, those are the things that he is saying men are not to look to for salvation. Nor can they be saved by observing the Divinely ordained day of rest. But Paul would not take the same view of the day of rest as he did of other days. It is a different day. It is different, first of all because (Verse 3, Genesis 2) “*God blessed the seventh day*”. Is there no blessing on the other days? Indeed there is. But there is extra blessing on the day the Lord has set aside. “God blessed the seventh day”. Now do you feel blessed as you sit in church on Sunday? Or do you feel parched? Do you come expectant, looking eagerly for what God has to set before you? Or do you come in a rather lackadaisical way—“we might get blessed today or we might not”. My dear friend, you should always expect a blessing on the Lord's Day. On this day that is set aside for worship and for praise, you should come expecting to be blessed because “God blessed the seventh day”. He has tied up blessing with it. He has wrapped it up in blessing. There is blessing for you. There is blessing for me. And there isn't blessing of the sort that is restricted in

supply and “runs out”, so that you find that you are the next man in the queue, and suddenly the fellow in front of you got the last bit going! There is blessing for *you* as well as blessing for the fellow in front of you. God has blessing for you on the day that He has particularly blessed. He not only blessed the seventh day—declaring “That is a special day”, but He has made clear, “There is special blessing for My people on that day. And there is special blessing for those who are not My people. They may become My people on that day. There are special opportunities for them to become My people.

Different Day

Not only did God *bless* the seventh day, but God *sanctified* it as Genesis 2, Verse 3, said “. . . God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it”. Now what does it mean to sanctify the day? It means to set it apart. That’s the root meaning of sanctified—set apart. And something that is set apart is *different*. It is not in with the rest. It is different. “Six days to do your work”, says God, “treat them all alike. But here’s another day—the seventh day. This is My day. This is different. I have set this day apart for special purposes. I have set this day apart because I have something special *for* you on this day, and I have set this day apart because I am looking to you specially on this day for something *from* you. I have got something special for you. I want something special from you”. God sanctified this day. He did not sanctify it to make men do what the Jews *did* that day! They made it such a burden. The day that was intended to be a day of inestimable blessing became a day of intolerable burden. It was cluttered up with ridiculous regulations. There were 1,500 things that you must not do on the sabbath day. A scribe mustn’t carry his pen in case he was tempted to write a letter on the sabbath day. A doctor mustn’t set a broken bone—that must wait until the sabbath is over. And the wearing of false teeth was prohibited because that would involve unjustified work! Well, it was no wonder that our Lord brushed aside the Pharisees’ and Scribes’ interpretation of

has got to go on. A day of rest from the things that *need not be done* on the sabbath day. *Works of necessity* and *works of mercy*—yes. But nothing else is really justified if you are going to get out of the day that which God has put into the day for you.

Dutiful Activity

A day of duty. It is a day of duty to our own soul. A day of duty when we can reflect on what God has done for us and think of our deliverances and think of our folly and our mistakes. A day of stocktaking. A day of wondering. How we are going to shape up as we face the future. A day of meditation. A day of weighing up of what God has set. Do you meditate on the Lord's Day? Or are you in such an unholy evangelical rush that you have no time for rest on the Lord's day? Happy is the child for whom the Lord's Day has no sense of rush and restlessness. Unhappy is the child who is forced to "go three times" because Mother was, and who gives it all up by and by because he has had an overdose. Twice a day is enough for most children if the day is to be a day of rest and not a day of weariness, and happy is the child who is *taken* to church, not just *sent*! The Lord's Day is given to us to be *a day of intake*, as we ponder God's word for ourselves. A day of intake, as we listen to the preaching and exposition of God's word. *A day of content* as we weigh up the meaning of what we have heard. *A day of output* as we put into resolve or into the teaching of others what it is that God has brought home to us. A different day. *A day of witness.* But not primarily of witness. Primarily *a day of worship.* Happy is the Christian who in the six days of hurly-burly and conflict with others who know not Christ is forever witnessing. That Christian does not feel that "here comes the one day when I have got to put everything into witnessing". That Christian can relax on the Lord's Day and take in things that will do his own soul good. Sunday-school, open air work, Gospel meetings; all these things have their special place on the Lord's Day. But worship, adoration, the feeding of our own soul, the bringing out

the sabbath day. It was no wonder that He said, "You don't understand. The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath". They were treating man as a poor little guinea-pig that had to be fitted into this machine. They were treating him as Procrustes used to treat his victims in his notorious Inn, stretching them—or shortening them!—to fit his beds. "The sabbath is made for man not man for the sabbath". Some people have misinterpreted this verse. They say, "Therefore, God has given us one day in seven as a *holiday*. It is to do what we jolly well like, go where we like, think what we like" and so on. Oh no! God has given us this day for a *Holy day*, a day set apart from the other days—God's day; a day of rest; a day of gladness; a day of duty. But not of intolerable burden—a day of joy.

Distinctive Rest

God has linked this day with His own rest—Verse 3, Genesis 2. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it *because that* in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made. Why did He set it apart? Because He rested on it. Now there is more than one way of resting. Two people go up Snowdon. One gets to the top and sits down and says, "Thank goodness I have got here at last. I don't know how long I will have to stay before I will have the strength to go down again". Another gets up and he is absolutely thrilled. Yes indeed he has got here at last, but, "Look at that lake down there and look at that lake over there and just look at that peninsula sticking out there. My word isn't this wonderful, where's my camera? How wonderful that the sun is shining!" And he is just brimming full of energy. He could climb another Snowdon if they could lay one on! They are both resting, but how differently. One is resting in exhaustion and the other is resting in delight. One is resting because he wants strength to get down again, and the other is resting because he has nothing more to climb; and that is how God was resting. Not out of any sense of weariness. Not because it had taken a lot out of Him to make this world. It took the very

best God had to redeem sinful men, but it didn't take anything out of God to make the world. And the reason why He rested was not because He was tired, but because He was satisfied there was nothing more to do. That work was done. There was no more new creation to bring into activity. When we read of God resting, we mustn't imagine for a moment that he folded His arms, as it were and said, "I'll leave it to them now. There is no more for Me to do". God has been working as John 5, Verse 17, says, ever since the day He finished creation. He has been maintaining all that He set into motion. "My Father worked right up to this very moment and I work too—sabbath or no sabbath", said the Lord Jesus. And the Jews, of course, were furious with Him because it didn't fit in with their ideas of how the sabbath ought to be observed. It was a day linked with God's own rest. A day when He looks upon everything that He has made and behold it is very good, and when He looks around and takes delight in His finished work—takes delight in creation: "Behold it was very good". And God has given us the sabbath day for us to look around and take in afresh the wonder of His creation. A day for us to meditate on the magnitude of the stars, and the majesty of the sun, and the wonder of the moon; on the loveliness of the earth in which we live. The world around us that is so beautiful and only man is vile. A day for us to rest with delighted contemplation. A day for us to rest from our work as God rested from His. Notice, will you, "ended His work" which He had made, and "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which he had made". Rest on the one side. Work made on the other side. You see the contrast. Work and making things; that is for the week. Rest from work and things that are made; that is for the different day, this day that is set aside. This day that is to be observed by the divine ordinance of God is a day of rest. Rest from our work. Rest from our school work. Rest from our ordinary work, unless we happen to be doctors or nurses; unless we are involved in work of mercy; unless we happen to be on a ship's crew and we find ourselves in mid-ocean and no anchor will reach down to the bottom of where we are and the ship

of our own spirit to bring to Him what He is looking for from us; all this is our special duty on the Lord's Day. Is it a happy day for you? Or is it a miserable day? Are you glad when it is over, or do you look forward to it next week? A day of special duty to God. This is the day the Lord has made, this day when he looks for our worship, this day when he looks for our praise, this day when he looks for our worship and thanksgiving, this day when he wants to pour into us special blessings through reading Christian biography. Happy Christians make the most of this day for reading His own Word, and talking with others about His own things: a day of rest; *a day of gladness*; a day of delight. Isaiah 58, Verses 13 and 14, talk about . . . "if thou shalt turn away thy foot from doing thine own pleasure" on the Lord's day, then it shall be the Lord's pleasure. It will be *a day of delight*. A day of delight, not a day of misery! Not a day of painful duty, but a day of delight. "The old paths", says Jeremiah, "are good paths". You go in them and you shall find rest unto your souls. Jeremiah 6, Verse 16. And the old paths contain the one day in seven that is set apart for worship and for adoration. "A sabbath well spent brings a week of content". In her book "Smoke on the Mountain", Joy Davidman imagines a student from Mars visiting the earth. He wants to prepare a thesis on comparative anthropology. He flies low over America on a fine summer's day. He notes how the natives spread themselves in the sun, and assumes that they are sunworshippers who set aside the one day in seven for this special worship of their god. Their ritual seems to require a special dress. Many of the ceremonies involve a ball which is addressed by variously shaped instruments of wood. At times the devotees hurl themselves into the water and anoint themselves with oil. He observed that human sacrifice was practised systematically by means of a four-wheel car. It would also be said that he takes note of a small company of heretics who hide from the sun in buildings that look like prisons. They show no signs of frenzy, but appear to be emotionally placid and mentally blank. I hope that that is not a fair description of your Sunday congregation! But there is something in

this isn't there? What sort of an impression would we give to people, observing the way we live in Britain today? How many sunworshippers there are! And how few who seem to care first and foremost for the Glory of God.

Thank God for the folk who dare to be different. David Sheppard has never played cricket on Sunday since he became a committed Christian. Tom Farrell, who represented Britain in the Olympic Games, was asked why it was that he didn't run in 1956 against Russia and France, when that year he had broken the British Games' record in the 440 hurdles. Why didn't he run? "Well", he said, "That particular race was on a Sunday and Sunday is God's Day and I do want to give it all to Him". "Secondly", he said, "There are so many grand Christian folk who have brought up children to keep the Lord's day that I don't want to make it more difficult for any fellow, knowing how boys respect an athlete's word. Thirdly, I do want God to have all the Glory for anything that I do. Because, after all, it is in His wonderful grace alone that this has been brought about". This presents a vivid contrast to the attitude of so many living in our present age. "Wherefore, God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it". May it be to us a day of rest, a day of joy and a day of gladness.

—Let us Pray—

Lord help us to observe this day as Thou wouldst have each one of us observe it, and grant that as we get the good Thou hast for us out of this day, we may be able to spread abroad in this restless world something of the rest which comes to us on the day of rest from the Lord of the Sabbath, for His namesake. Amen.

Publishers :
THE LORD'S DAY OBSERVANCE SOCIETY
55, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4
and
3, Selborne Road, Glasgow, W.3.
