

The Sabbath at Creation

by Bob Pulliam

While Seventh-Day Adventism may first come to our minds, when we think of Sabbath Day observance, they are not the only ones to hold this conviction through the years. In fact, before Seventh-Day Adventism, there were the Seventh-Day Baptists. History shows us that it was their influence that molded the early beginnings of Seventh-Day Adventism. For more on that subject, see *Origins of Seventh-Day Adventism*.

Here we need to concentrate on the first reason in a list of reasons for their insistence on Sabbath Day worship. They contend that God created the Sabbath in the beginning to be observed throughout the existence of the earth. Let's examine this line of reasoning a little more closely.

In the Beginning...

All Bible believers recognize the fact that God observed the Seventh day as a day of rest when He created the heavens and the earth:

"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." (Gen 2:2f)

The Adventist argues that since God "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it", all mankind is obligated to observe it. Does this truly follow? Was it blessed and sanctified for all mankind to observe? Somewhere in Genesis I would expect to find it being observed. But it isn't brought to our attention again until we come to the Exodus of the Israelites. So, why is the seventh day highlighted in Genesis two?

It is important to remember that Moses was writing the book of Genesis at the time of the Exodus and wanderings. He was primarily writing it for the benefit of the Israelites, although it's content has great benefit for us as well. So, where is the Sabbath commanded before Exodus 20? Where do we find any human observing it before the book of Exodus? If this was a universal law that merited an entire day of it's own, why don't we hear of it again until Exodus? These are serious questions, that are troubling to the modern Sabbath keeping position. On the other hand, I can easily find the reason that the Sabbath is mentioned in Genesis two, and not again until Exodus twenty, if I throw out any biased doctrinal stand...

To Whom Was the Sabbath Given?...

To claim that the Sabbath was given at the creation for all mankind to observe is to deny the plain fact of scripture. For example, we read this:

"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire," (Dt 5:1-4)

If Moses had said nothing more than that God had made a covenant with the Israelites in Horeb, this passage would be no different than several other passages in the Old Testament. But it does say more... much more. Moses goes on to say that the "Lord made not this covenant with our fathers". But surely he isn't talking about the ten commandments!... But he is! Verse four in this text describes the way God spoke to the Israelites in Exodus chapter twenty -- when He spoke to them the ten commandments. If we have any doubt about the reference, we need only read on... Verses six through twenty-

one tells us what was involved in this "covenant". There we find the ten commandments restated for us, and God's command on the Sabbath may be found, beginning at verse twelve.

It becomes clear that God did not give Sabbath worship to the fathers. And if we were confused about it's lack of mention before Exodus twenty, we can clearly see why as we read this text! This was not an "eternal covenant" as the Sabbatarian would contend. It was first instituted at Mt Horeb (which is also called Sinai).

Solomon referred to the covenant of the Lord that He made with Israel "when he brought them out of the land of Egypt (I Kgs 8:21; see also Ex 34:27; Mal 4:4; Dt 6:20-25). God's prophets rebuked many nations in the Old Testament. Assyria; Babylon; Edom; just to name a few. Which of these did God ever rebuke for not keeping the Sabbath? They were rebuked for many things; but never for a refusal to keep the Sabbath. That should be incredibly surprising, if you believe that the Sabbath was part of an eternal covenant with mankind. But if you understand that God did not command the Sabbath until the exodus, and only commanded it of the Israelites, you think nothing of the lack of reference to the Sabbath.

Conclusion...

The Sabbath was never commanded of anyone other than the Israelites. And it was not commanded of them until they arrived at Mt Sinai and God spoke to them. The Sabbath clearly lies outside the obligations of Gentiles if the New Testament does not command it either.