

The Foundation of God's Government

Sabbath Afternoon, May 25

The germ in the seed grows by the unfolding of the life-principle which God has implanted. Its development depends upon no human power. So it is with the kingdom of Christ. It is a new creation. Its principles of development are the opposite of those that rule the kingdoms of this world. Earthly governments prevail by physical force; they maintain their dominion by war; but the founder of the new kingdom is the Prince of Peace. The Holy Spirit represents worldly kingdoms under the symbol of fierce beasts of prey; but Christ is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin. —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 77.

It was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to "magnify the law" and to "make it honorable." Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God's law is unchangeable. Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its transgression. The death of Christ proves it immutable. And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe—what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God. —*The Great Controversy*, p. 503.

Satan is constantly at work, with intense energy and under a thousand disguises, to misrepresent the character and government of God. With extensive, well-organized plans and marvelous power, he is working to hold the inhabitants of the world under his deceptions. God, the One infinite and all-wise, sees the end from the beginning, and in dealing with evil His plans were far-reaching and comprehensive. It was His purpose, not merely to put down the rebellion, but to demonstrate to all the universe the nature of the rebellion. God's plan [unfolds], showing both His justice and His mercy, and fully vindicating His wisdom and righteousness in His dealings with evil. . . .

By the facts unfolded in the progress of the great controversy, God will demonstrate the principles of His rules of government, which have been falsified by Satan and by all whom he has deceived. His justice will finally be acknowledged by the whole world. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 78, 79.

The Sanctuary and the Law

In the Revelation, John says, "The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." Revelation 11:19. John saw in vision the Lord's people looking for His coming and searching for truth. As the temple of God was opened unto His people, the light of the law of God, which was in the ark, shone forth. Those who receive this light are brought to view in the proclamation of the third angel's message. —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1152.

As we prayed the Holy Ghost fell upon us. . . . Soon I was lost to earthly things and was wrapped in a vision of God's glory. I saw an angel flying swiftly to me. He quickly carried me from the earth to the Holy City. In the city I saw a temple, which I entered. I passed through a door before I came to the first veil. This veil was raised, and I passed into the holy place. . . .

In the holiest I saw an ark; on the top and sides of it was purest gold. On each end of the ark was a lovely cherub, with its wings spread out over it. . . . In the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of stone which folded together like a book. Jesus opened them, and I saw the ten commandments written on them with the finger of God. On one table were four, and on the other six. The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six. But the fourth, the Sabbath commandment, shone above them all; for the Sabbath was set apart to be kept in honor of God's holy name. The holy Sabbath looked glorious—a halo of glory was all around it.

I saw that the Sabbath commandment was not nailed to the cross. If it was, the other nine commandments were; and we are at liberty to break them all, as well as to break the fourth. I saw that God had not changed the Sabbath, for He never changes. But the pope had changed it from the seventh to the first day of the week; for he was to change times and laws. —*Early Writings*, p. 32.

The seventh-day Sabbath is in no uncertainty. It is God's memorial of His work of creation. It is set up as a heaven-given memorial, to be observed as a sign of obedience. God wrote the whole law with His finger on two tables of stone. . . .

. . . [L]et not your faith fail. We are to stand fast by our colors, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. All those who hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end will keep the seventh-day Sabbath, which comes to us as marked by the sun. —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 318.

The Immutability of God's Law

When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner.

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him. But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God.

Through Jesus, God's mercy was manifested to men; but mercy does not set aside justice. The law reveals the attributes of God's character, and not a jot or tittle of it could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man's redemption. —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 761, 762.

When the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, and every man shall be judged according to the things written in the books, then the tables of stone, hidden by God until that day, will be presented before the world as the standard of righteousness. Then men and women will see that the prerequisite of their salvation is obedience to the perfect law of God. None will find excuse for sin. By the righteous principles of that law, men will receive their sentence of life or of death. —*Ellen G. White Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1109.

The law of God in the sanctuary in heaven is the great original, of which the precepts inscribed upon the tables of stone and recorded by Moses in the Pentateuch were an unerring transcript. Those who arrived at an understanding of this important point were thus led to see the sacred, unchanging character of the divine law. They saw, as never before, the force of the Saviour's words: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." Matthew 5:18. The law of God, being a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, must forever endure, "as a faithful witness in heaven." Not one command has been annulled; not a jot or tittle has been changed. Says the psalmist: "Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." "All His commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever." Psalm 119:89; 111:7, 8. —*The Great Controversy*, p. 434.

The Sabbath and the Law

Do not place your influence against God's commandments. That law is just as Jehovah wrote it in the temple of heaven. Man may trample upon its copy here below, but the original is kept in the ark of God in heaven; and on the cover of this ark, right above that law, is the mercy seat. Jesus stands right there before that ark to mediate for man. . . .

Nothing written on those tables could be blotted out. The precious record of the law was placed in the ark of the testament and is still there, safely hidden from the human family. But in God's appointed time He will bring forth these tables of stone to be a testimony to all the world against the disregard of His commandments and against the idolatrous worship of a counterfeit Sabbath. —Ellen G. White *Comments*, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1109.

"The importance of the Sabbath as the memorial of creation is that it keeps ever present the true reason why worship is due to God"—because He is the Creator, and we are His creatures. "The Sabbath therefore lies at the very foundation of divine worship, for it teaches this great truth in the most impressive manner, and no other institution does this. The true ground of divine worship, not of that on the seventh day merely, but of all worship, is found in the distinction between the Creator and His creatures. This great fact can never become obsolete, and must never be forgotten."—J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*, chapter 27. It was to keep this truth ever before the minds of men, that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden; and so long as the fact that He is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship Him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 437, 438.

[The Sabbath] points to Him [Christ] as both the Creator and the Sanctifier. It declares that He who created all things in heaven and in earth, and by whom all things hold together, is the head of the church, and that by His power we are reconciled to God. For, speaking of Israel, He said, "I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them,"—make them holy. Ezekiel 20:12. Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ's power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God. . . .

To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ's creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 288, 289.

The Mark of the Beast

The great controversy between good and evil will increase in intensity to the very close of time. In all ages the wrath of Satan has been manifested against the church of Christ; and God has bestowed His grace and Spirit upon His people to strengthen them to stand against the power of the evil one. When the apostles of Christ were to bear His gospel to the world and to record it for all future ages, they were especially endowed with the enlightenment of the Spirit. But as the church approaches her final deliverance, Satan is to work with greater power. He comes down "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Revelation 12:12. He will work "with all power and signs and lying wonders." 2 Thessalonians 2:9.

For six thousand years that mastermind that once was highest among the angels of God has been wholly bent to the work of deception and ruin. And all the depths of satanic skill and subtlety acquired, all the cruelty developed, during these struggles of the ages, will be brought to bear against God's people in the final conflict. And in this time of peril the followers of Christ are to bear to the world the warning of the Lord's second advent; and a people are to be prepared to stand before Him at His coming, "without spot, and blameless." 2 Peter 3:14. At this time the special endowment of divine grace and power is not less needful to the church than in apostolic days. —*The Great Controversy, Introduction, p. ix.*

The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence. And wherever, in the Bible, His claim to reverence and worship, above the gods of the heathen, is presented, there is cited the evidence of His creative power. "All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens." Psalm 96:5. "To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things." . . . [Say the psalmist], "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Psalm 100:3; 95:6.

And the holy beings who worship God in heaven state, as the reason why their homage is due to Him: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things." Revelation 4:11. —*The Great Controversy, p. 436.*

Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God, "Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." It follows that the message which commands men to worship God and keep His commandments will especially call upon them to keep the fourth commandment. —*The Great Controversy, p. 437.*

The Three Angels' Messages

[The third] angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven, "saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. . . . Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

This is the people that are repairing the breach in the law of God. They see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment has been supplanted by a spurious sabbath, a day that has no sanction in the Word of God. Amid great opposition they become loyal to their God, and take their position under the standard of the third angel. —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1152.

If we would have the spirit and power of the third angel's message, we must present the law and the gospel together, for they go hand in hand. As a power from beneath is stirring up the children of disobedience to make void the law of God, and to trample upon the truth that Christ is our righteousness, a power from above is moving upon the hearts of those who are loyal, to exalt the law, and to lift up Jesus as a complete Saviour. Unless divine power is brought into the experience of the people of God, false theories and ideas will take minds captive, Christ and His righteousness will be dropped out of the experience of many, and their faith will be without power or life.

Ministers are to present Christ in His fulness both in the churches and in new fields, that the hearers may have an intelligent faith. The people must be instructed that Christ is unto them salvation and righteousness. . . .

The burden of our message is not only the commandments of God, but the faith of Jesus. A bright light shines upon our pathway today, and it leads to increased faith in Jesus. We must receive every ray of light, and walk in it. —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 161, 162.

When the world makes void the law of God, what will be the effect upon the truly obedient and righteous? Will they be carried away by the strong current of evil? Because so many rank themselves under the banner of the prince of darkness, will God's commandment-keeping people swerve from their allegiance? Never! Not one who is abiding in Christ will fail or fall. His followers will bow in obedience to a higher authority than that of any earthly potentate. While the contempt placed upon God's commandments leads many to suppress the truth and show less reverence for it, the faithful ones will with greater earnestness hold aloft its distinguishing truths. —*Maranatha*, p. 28.

Friday, May 31

For Further Reading

The Faith I Live By, "The People Who Keep God's Law," p. 307;
Maranatha, "The Remnant and the Sealing," p. 213.