

The Definite Seventh Day

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Can a definite day be observed by all the inhabitants of the earth?

This, of course, depends upon the proper answer to another question; viz., Is there such a thing as a definite day of the week, or month, or year, to the whole human family? If there is, all can observe it; if there is not, then chronology itself is thrown into confusion by the indefiniteness of dates which necessarily ensues. On what ground, then, is it asserted that the reckoning of a definite day by the whole family of man is an impossibility?

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STATEMENT OF THE DIFFICULTY

Our world is a vast globe which makes a complete revolution upon its axis once every twenty-four hours. In consequence of this, it is night to a portion of its inhabitants while it is day to the other portion. The day is therefore twelve hours earlier on one side of the globe than it is upon the other. And unless we can fix some line, or point, or place, from which to begin the reckoning of the day, we are thrown into confusion as to the definite day. Moreover, those who circumnavigate the globe in one direction gain a day by the operation; while those who sail around it in the opposite direction lose a day. We cannot, indeed, *actually* gain a day, nor is it possible for us really to lose one. It would therefore be more correct for us to speak of adding a day to our

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reckoning, or of dropping a day from it, than to speak of a day as actually lost or gained. We drop a day in circumnavigating the globe from east to west. This is done by going with the sun, and thus prolonging the time that it remains above the horizon. By this means we make each of our days a fraction more than twenty-four hours long. And in the complete circuit of our globe, we thus use up one entire period of twenty-four hours. And we add a day to our reckoning by going round the world from west to east. For as we thus travel in a direction opposite to the sun, we make the period of sunlight each day a fraction less to ourselves than it would have been had we remained stationary. And so also of the night, which we shorten in the same manner. As we thus take a fraction from each period between the successive sunsets, we do, in the complete circuit of

the globe, thus save one day as the sum total of these fractions, though we have had no more real time than those who remained at home, whose reckoning is one day less than ours.

Or to state it in another form: If we travel in the same direction with the motion of the earth, we gain one revolution of the sun by going ourselves one time more around the earth's axis than do those who, during the same time, remain in their own land. And, again, if we travel in the direction opposite to the motion of the earth, *i.e.*, if we go as the sun appears to go, from east to west, we actually make one revolution around the earth's axis less than do those who remain at home. For as we travel against the motion of the earth, our circuit of the globe offsets one of the revolutions which the earth has made on its axis during this time. As a consequence, those who go round the world eastward are, when they arrive at their starting point, one day in

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advance of the reckoning of those who live in the country from which they started. And those who go around it in a westerly direction come out one day behind the reckoning of their own country.

The number of those who actually accomplish the circuit of the globe is, comparatively speaking, very small. But these are not the only ones whose case presents a problem for solution. The people of Eastern Asia are one day in advance of the people of California. Also, the people of Alaska, recently transferred from the government of Russia to that of the United States, have a reckoning of time which is one day in advance of ours. And such was the case with the inhabitants of Pitcairn's Island in the South Pacific, lying in the longitude of the west side of British America. These people brought their reckoning eastward from the coast of Asia, and thus, when visited by sailors who came westward from England, their time was one day in advance of the reckoning of those sailors. And, finally, the island of Australia, which lies south of the continent of Asia, gives occasion for a consideration of this question of the proper reckoning of the week. For if it conform in its reckoning of the week to that of the people of Eastern Asia, who are directly to the north of it, its time will be one day in advance of those who go to it across the Pacific Ocean from the west coast of America.

WHAT MANY PERSONS CONCLUDE FROM THIS

These considerations are supposed to prove that the observance of the definite seventh day is impossible, and that the fourth commandment requires, not the seventh day, but the seventh part of time. But before adopting a conclusion which compels us to deny some of the plainest

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statements of the Bible, let us see whether any such necessity exists.

EXAMINATION OF THE FACTS IN THE CASE

To make this examination, let us now see how many definite points we can fix by indisputable facts.

1. A day of twenty-four hours is made up of an evening and a morning; *i.e.*, of darkness and light, or of night and day.

2. The sun, by God's appointment, rules the day. Gen.1:16.

3. Each day begins with sunset. Gen.1:5; Lev.23:32; Deut.16:6; Mark1:32.

4. The setting and the rising of the sun are caused by the revolution of the earth upon its axis once in twenty-four hours.

5. The earth turns from west to east, causing the sun to make the apparent circuit of the globe from east to west.

6. Thus, by divine arrangement, the course of day around our globe is from the east to the west; for it is thus that darkness and light follow each other around the world. For as the day begins with sunset, it cannot begin all around the world at once. And again, as the commencement of day must follow in the track of sunset around the world, it does certainly always go westward, and never eastward.

7. The day must therefore begin in the east. But where on our round earth is the east? The Old World, Europe, Asia, and Africa, is no more east of the New World, North and South America, than is the New World east of the Old.

8. But we must give to the Old World the precedence,

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and accept it as the Eastern Continent. For it is a matter of fact that each day begins as far east as the eastern coast of Asia, and comes thence westward to America, and that it does not begin in America and go thence to Asia. And it is certain that this order is right; for mankind originated in Asia, and from thence the New World was peopled. The first sunset in creation week was at that point farthest east at which the light of the sun could be first seen. This is certainly true, and it is of special interest in this case. For if the course of the sun in its westward journey is to rule the day, that rule should begin from the most eastern point at which its light could be seen. That point presented it to the most eastern observer, had men then existed, as just disappearing in the west. And at that very point, the fourth day of creation commenced. And sunset, which has ever since marked the beginning of the twenty-four-hour day, has followed on from that point in a never-ceasing circuit, divided into separate periods by passing that point from which it first started, which thus marks the commencement of the course of each day.

9. But no argument from the commonly-supposed location of Eden within the bounds of the present Turkish Empire can be admitted as sufficient to establish the beginning of the course of day to be in the western part of Asia. For it is certain that the geography of the antediluvian world cannot be identified with that of the world since the flood. The four rivers which were parted from one near the site of paradise cannot embrace in their number the Euphrates of the present earth, though one of those rivers did bear that name. Indeed, it is of no consequence to this argument whether paradise was in Western Asia or further east; for there

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is a manifest unfitness in locating this line through the Garden of Eden. We have, therefore, nothing to do with the establishment of an imaginary line from north to south through the heart of the Eastern Continent, on the west side of which the day should begin, and twenty-four hours later come round the world to those just across it on the eastern side. The wisdom of God has not involved the human family in such confusion as would be inevitable were this the case.

10. It is certain, as we have seen, that each day travels westward round the world, and also that it comes to us from Asia. But there must be some line, or barrier, or natural division, whence the course of day begins; for if there be not, all reckoning of time is thrown into confusion. Were there no starting point to the course of day, we should only need to journey east in order to ascertain that day begins in China twelve hours earlier than with us; and to journey thence eastward to our own country to prove that we are twelve hours in advance of the time in China. Such confusion and contradiction, however, does not exist; a sufficient proof in itself that the course of day does actually have a commencement and termination of its circuit of our globe.

11. There is a point from which each day of the seven sets out on its circuit of the globe. Each of these days makes one circuit, and but one, during each weekly cycle. Each day is made up of sunset, twilight, evening, midnight, cock-crowing, daybreak, sunrise, morning, forenoon, midday, afternoon, and sun's decline. It takes just twenty-four hours for each day, thus constituted, to pass any point in its circuit of the earth. And hence it is evident that the *commencement* of each day completes the compass of our earth twenty-four hours

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before the *end* of that same day of the week accomplishes the same journey.

12. Moreover, when sunset, which is the commencement of each day, has come round to the point where the circuit of the day is accomplished, it does not tarry for the other parts of the day to come up that they may all cross the line together; but without one moment's delay it passes the line which divides between the commencement and the end of that circuit, and beginning a new day it leaves the other divisions one by one to do their part in filling out the old day east of the line, which stands in the count of days one day behind the day which commences on the west of that line.

And as these different divisions of the day fill out their time, they severally pass that line, and by that very act become corresponding parts of a new day in the cycle of the week.

13. The reckoning of time at the commencement of the course of day must therefore be twenty-four hours in advance of its computation where that course ends. Those, therefore, who cross this line from east to west, or from west to east, have to recognize this fact by dropping one day from their computation, or by adding one day to it.

14. It is a remarkable fact that this line of transition or division between the beginning and the termination of the course of day is found in crossing the Pacific Ocean. For we may start from California and proceed *eastward* to the eastern coast of Asia, and we shall at every meridian we cross be in perfect harmony, as to our count of the days, with all the people living upon that meridian; and when

we reach China we shall have exactly the same count of days that they have in China. Again, if we start from China and *reverse* this journey,

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making our way *westward* to San Francisco, our days will correspond exactly to those of the countries we cross; and when we reach that city we shall have the same day that the people of that place have. This journey takes us fully two-thirds around the world, yet does not change our count of the days of the week. But take notice: If we cross the Pacific Ocean, either westward to China, or eastward from China to California, we find in the one case that we are one day behind the people of China; and in the other case that we are one day in advance of the people of California. And this is because of the well-known fact that the west shore of the Pacific Ocean is one day in advance of the time on the east shore of that ocean.

15. The dividing line between the commencement and the end of the course of day in its circuit round the world is, therefore, somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Now let us put together several facts.

(1.) The day comes westward from Asia.

(2.) It may be traced back eastward from America to the farthest verge of Asia on the west side of Behring's Straits, and no change take place in the count of the day.

(3.) It is manifestly impracticable to establish *upon the land* a line west of which the day is twenty-four hours in advance of that upon the east side of that line. And, therefore, as the day comes to the American continent westward from Asia, we must in our count follow the course of day westward to the confines of America at the east side of Behring's Straits.

(4.) And so of Asia: We must trace back the commencement of the course of day to the eastern verge of Asia, on the west of Behring's Straits.

(5.) And now observe, the commencement and the

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termination of the course of day are brought near together. And observe further this remarkable fact, that a line drawn from north to south through Behring's Straits touches no body of land unless possibly some very minute islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. And it is worthy of special notice that no such line can be drawn through any other body of water upon the globe.

16. It is true that the people of Alaska, having come to that country eastward from Asia, across Behring's Straits, have brought with them the numbering of the days which they had in Asia, making it correspond exactly to that on the other side of the Pacific, and causing, so far as their action can do it, that the day should commence the circuit of the globe from the west side of America. This is a manifest error; for the day comes in the divine order with the sun from Asia, and the American continent receiving the day in this manner, its extreme western verge should mark the end of the circuit of day, and not the beginning of that circuit. The people of Alaska stand one day ahead in their count, holding the same relation to our count of the days that the people of China do to that of those who go thither westward from America. The day which we carry to Alaska as the seventh, the Alaskans call the first day of the week. Let them change the

numbering of the days, as they manifestly should, and let them observe as the Sabbath of the Lord the day they now keep; for it is really such.

17. The case of the inhabitants of Pitcairn's Island, a small body of land some six miles in length by three in breadth, has long been used as proof that the definite seventh day cannot be kept in all the world. It is the same thing in principle as the case of the Alaskans.

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This island is situated in the South Pacific Ocean, and lies east of the eastern meridian of Alaska. It was settled by sailors who came east to it. When, therefore, they were discovered and visited by English sailors who went west to them, the same discrepancy was manifested as is now seen between ourselves and the Alaskans. The reckoning of the two parties brought the beginning of the course of day, and the end of that course, to one spot, and they were found to be, as they really are, twenty-four hours apart. Now the decision of this is not hard. As Pitcairn's Island lies farther east than Alaska, it should certainly be governed by the same principles as that country. It should conform to the reckoning of day as it comes westward around the world.

18. Australia presents no real difficulty. It lies south of the continent of Asia, and does not extend as far to the east as the eastern extremity of Asia, by about 40 degrees of longitude, or more than 2000 miles. It is, moreover, closely connected with the continent of Asia by many islands. Its reckoning of time corresponds with that of Asia; and this is as it should be. Our day will be found to correspond exactly with that of Australia, if we trace back the track of the sun by going eastward to it. If, however, we journey to it westward across the Pacific Ocean, we pass from the termination of the circuit of day to that part of the globe where that circuit commences; and we must, in order to have the correct reckoning of the week, set our count ahead just one day.

19. But what about the gain or loss of a day in circumnavigating the globe? The day begins earlier or later according as we journey east or west. This loss or gain of time day by day, as indicated by our watches, is simply because we are tracing back the track of day

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toward its source, or following forward on that track toward its termination. And this constant change keeps us in exact accord with the progress of day in its course around the world. And when we cross the day line and step forward or backward from one day to another, by that act we change our count that we may conform to the course of day. This change actually takes place only in the act of crossing the Pacific. If we go westward to China, we pass from the end of the circuit of day to its beginning. If we turn from China, eastward to America, we pass at once from the beginning of the course of day to the termination of that course. In order, therefore, that we may preserve the proper computation of the week, we must, in one case, add a day to our reckoning, and in the other case we must set that reckoning back one day. And this is both reasonable and just. For there must be a point where the first day of each week and month and year commences. To deny it, is to throw all dates into confusion; to admit it, is to acknowledge that the existence of definite weeks is possible.

And the existence of this line in the Pacific alone is further evinced by the fact that if one man sets out eastward from the east shore of the Pacific, and another sets out westward from the west shore of that ocean, when they meet, they will be in exact harmony in their count of the days; and if they pass each other, each to that point from which the other set out, each will have the same count of the days with the people of the place at which he has arrived; for neither has crossed the line which divides between the commencement and termination of the course of day.

20. The wisdom of God has given to our earth a globular form, and has caused it to revolve upon its axis.

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So far is this from presenting any real difficulty in the way of those who keep the definite seventh day, it is actually that without which such observance would be impossible. For if our earth stood still, one side would have perpetual day, and the other side unending night. There could be in that case no succession of day and night, and no such thing as a seventh day. But by the divine arrangement of a revolving globular world, the definite seventh day comes to all the inhabitants of the earth, and they can observe it, if they have a heart to obey God. Even the dwellers within the polar circles, where for a season it is all night, and for another season all day, can readily determine the revolution of the earth upon its axis, and can, if they are so disposed, observe the Sabbath of the Lord.

21. When God was laying the foundations of the earth in the establishment of the original order of its existence, and the enactment of those laws which govern its operations, he said (Gen.1:9, 10), "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God called the dry land earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he seas; and God SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD." Were there not this great natural barrier, extending from pole to pole, the reckoning of definite days would be quite impossible. The next day after God had formed the sea, he caused the sun to become the ruler of the day, and the dispenser of light. It is evident that as each of the days of creation began with evening, and as each evening since the creation of the sun is marked by sunset, the fourth day began with the sun's light just disappearing from that part of the earth from which day begins its course. There has never been a moment since then that the sun has not been in

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the act of setting as seen from some part of our globe. This does not make the reckoning of time indefinite and uncertain. For when sunset made its first journey around the globe, it carried with it the commencement of the fourth day to each meridian which it passed. And when it had passed the established division between the commencement and the termination of the circuit of day, and began its second journey from the west side of that line, it was the commencement of the fifth day of the week which the course of sunset thus carried around the world. And this great fact, which no candid man of any sect or party will deny, really explains why in crossing this line to the east we step back one day in our reckoning, and crossing it to the west we add a day to that reckoning. It is because the days of the week are really definite and tangible, and not as our

opponents represent them, indefinite and uncertain, that this change takes place. Indeed, we point to it as a conclusive evidence to all thoughtful, candid persons that the definite seventh day does come to all the dwellers upon our globe.

22. These facts have a decisive bearing upon the question whether it is a seventh part of our time, or the definite seventh day, which God requires us to observe. They are appealed to by first-day people to prove, in opposition to the express letters of the moral law, that God cannot mean the seventh day, but must simply intend that we observe a seventh part of our time as sacred to him. Now it is remarkable that these very things do prove just the reverse; viz., that the seventh part of time cannot be intended, and that the true seventh day is the very thing which the fourth commandment requires us to hallow. Those who have to make the change of one day in their reckoning as they pass from

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the close of the circuit of day to its beginning, or from the beginning of the circuit of day back to its close, do not and cannot observe the seventh part of time. Were that the plain teaching of the commandment, it would forbid their making this change of one day in their count, and would require them to continue to work six days and then to rest one day; whereas the change in the count of the days is made in order to conform to the fact that in passing the line in question, we step forward or backward, as the case may be, from one definite day of the week to another.

23. The change of one day in the count is that we may conform to the actual course of the days of the week in their circuit of the globe. The seventh day of the week, the very day of the Creator's rest, is thus secured by this very act which most people suppose renders its observance impossible. As the letter of the fourth commandment expressly enjoins the observance of that day on which God did rest from all his works, the seventh day is not any seventh day after six days of labor; but it is the seventh day of the week as established at creation. So the fourth commandment gives permission to labor on six days of the week, but forbids this on the seventh day of that cycle. Those do not therefore violate this precept when, at the transition from one day to another, they change the count of the days in order that they may actually keep the week as God gave it. They do thereby secure the very day hallowed in paradise, and their action with reference to a prior six days of labor is no more an exception than was that of Adam in his first observance of the Sabbath.

24. Here are two passages of Scripture which we commend to the careful attention of the reader:--

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(1.) "The Sabbath was made for man." Mark2:27.

(2.) "God that MADE THE WORLD and all things therein . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for TO DWELL ON ALL THE FACE OF THE EARTH." Acts17:24-26.

25. God, who made our world, made it of a globular form, and made man to dwell on all the face of it. And that the creation of the world might be commemorated, he set apart the seventh day of the week, because he rested upon it from that work, to be observed by the human family as the Sabbath of the

Lord. And we have seen from a careful survey of the whole subject, that wherever in the providence of God men are placed, the definite seventh day is to be found, and can be kept by those who are so minded. The observers of the first day of the week have attempted to show, in the things above examined, that the observance of a definite day is impossible, because the days of the week are indefinite and uncertain. The real intent of their action is to excuse themselves for not observing the day enjoined in the commandment. We have shown that the excuse is without foundation in truth; and we close by calling attention to the remarkable fact, that, whereas Sunday-keepers, who have a definite day to celebrate in their "first day of the week," have much to say concerning the impossibility of keeping a definite day the world over, no observer of the seventh day, wherever situated, whether Hebrew or Christian, ever found any difficulty of this kind in keeping the definite rest-day of the great Creator.

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