**“‘Numerical Designation’ of the Sabbath Commandment” The Present Truth 3, 19.**

E. J. Waggoner

In an article recently quoted from the *Friend*, was the statement that the agitation of the Sabbath question tends to turn men’s thoughts “away from the proper observance of the day, to the very subordinate question of its numerical designation.” In that sentence the writer expressed a very popular idea, one which we regard as a grave error; namely, that the “numerical designation” of the day is a minor affair in Sabbath observance. It seems to be the general idea that the main question concerning the Sabbath is, *How* should it be kept? and not, *When* should it be kept? We consider both questions highly important, but think their order should be reversed. {PTUK October 6, 1887, p. 291.1}

While it is impossible to say that one of two things is more important than the other when both are absolutely essential, we may readily determine which of them must first be considered. We have therefore no hesitation in saying that the “numerical designation” of the day is the first thing of importance in considering the question of Sabbath observance. If a man is told, “You ought to keep the Sabbath day,” the first question he would ask, if he knew nothing at all about the subject would be, “What is the Sabbath day.” {PTUK October 6, 1887, p. 291.2}

Now if we read the commandment we shall find that this is indeed the first point considered. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” {PTUK October 6, 1887, p. 291.3}

We see that in the commandment the Sabbath is introduced as an institution already well known. Then the first thing after the command proper, which is contained in the first clause, is the “numerical designation” of the day. “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.” So important did the Lord regard the “numerical designation” of the day, that he fixed that the very first thing. Then come directions for the proper observance of the day. “In it thou shalt not do any work.” That is, any of *thy* work, which must be performed in the preceding six days. {PTUK October 6, 1887, p. 291.4}

There are but seven days in a week, and the first day is the one commonly called Sunday. Every calendar and dictionary bears witness to this. More than this, the chief and, indeed, the only reason given for Sunday observance is that it commemorates the resurrection of Christ. But the resurrection of Christ was on the first day of the week; and thus Sunday observers everywhere and always record their belief that Sunday is the first day of the week. To deny that fact would be to overthrow their only argument for Sunday observance. But just as surely as Sunday is the first day of the week, Saturday is the seventh day. Well, the Lord says, “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.” If the “numerical designation” of the day is a matter of minor importance, will our friends please explain the fourth commandment? {PTUK October 6, 1887, p. 291.5}

We repeat that before we can consider the “proper observance of the day” of the Sabbath, it is absolutely necessary that we determine what particular day of the week the Sabbath is. For no matter how strictly we observe a day, abstaining from our own labour on it, and devoting its hours to the worship of God, that cannot constitute “proper observance of the Sabbath,” if the day itself is not the Sabbath. This fact seems so self-evident as to make argument useless. Moreover, if the rest and worship mentioned above be upon some one of the six days which God has devoted to labour, then that rest is not a proper observance of that day. We do not say that Sunday or Monday or any other day of the week may not be used, on occasions for religious worship, but we do say that for a regular practice, the only “proper observance” of Sunday, as well as of the five days following, is labour, and the only “proper observance of the Sabbath” is rest and worship on the seventh day of the week, commonly called Saturday. And this we say “by the word of the Lord.” See Exodus 16:22-30; 20:8-11; Luke 23:54-56. {PTUK October 6, 1887, p. 291.6}

E. J. WAGGONER.