**“The Sabbath-School. Acts 8th Chapter” The Signs of the Times, 9, 22.**

E. J. Waggoner

**Lesson for the Pacific Coast-June 16. Acts 8th Chapter.  
Notes on the Lesson.**

“And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem.” The Revised Version has it, “And on that day,” indicating that the martyrdom of Stephen was only the beginning of a general persecution. Like wild beasts, one taste of blood made the bigoted Jews clamorous for more. In fact, the language of the sacred historian implies the comparison of the maddened persecutors to wild beasts. Thus, at the close of Stephen’s speech they “gnashed on him with their teeth,” fit language to be applied to a wolf or a tiger. Again, in verse 3 it is said that Saul “made havoc of the church.” Of this, Farrar says: “Literally, ‘he was ravaging’-the church. No stronger metaphor could well have been used. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, but in the Septuagint, and in classical Greek, is applied to the wild boars which uproot a vineyard. Not content with the visitation of the synagogue, he got the authority for an inquisitorial visit from house to house, and even from the sacred retirement of the Christian home he dragged not only men, but women, to judgment and to prison. So thorough was his search, and so deadly were its effects, that, in referring to it, the Christians of Damascus can only speak of Saul as “he that *devastated* in Jerusalem them that call on this name,” using the strong word which is strictly applicable to an invading army which scathes a conquered country with fire and sword.” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.1}

On account of this persecution the believers at Jerusalem “were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.” In thus scattering they only obeyed the injunction of the Master, “But when they persecute you in this city, flee into another.” Their religious principles would not allow them to resist, and nothing would be gained for the cause of God if they should remain and submit to a wholesale massacre. We can even see the hand of Providence in allowing this persecution, for it was the means of spreading the truth throughout all the region. We have seen that the new converts were “of one heart and of one soul;” they loved one another’s society, and since they were necessarily shut off in a great measure from outside associations, there was danger that they would become clannish, and settle down, content with having received the truth. But now they were driven out, and were given a fresh opportunity to prove the sincerity of their conversion by “preaching the word.” Their persecutions did not quench their love of the truth. The wicked Jews thought to root out the heated religion of Jesus, but instead of that they caused the seed to be sown broadcast. Thus they proved that man “can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.2}

They were all scattered, “except the apostles.” It seems that God had worked for them still in Jerusalem. Christ had instructed them that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem,” and they were not in haste to leave the city. We cannot tell why they stayed, or what they did, but we may be sure that they followed the leading of the Spirit of God. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.3}

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.” This Philip was one of the “seven” spoken of in chapter 6. In Acts 21:8 he is further distinguished as “Philip the evangelist.” Some may query, how we know that the Philip who preached in Samaria, and who baptized the eunuch, was Philip the evangelist, and not Philip the apostle. The answer is easy: The apostles all remained in Jerusalem, many had embraced the truth at Samaria, and then they sent unto them Peter and John. Consequently, Philip the apostle must have also remained at Jerusalem. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.4}

“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God they sent unto them Peter and John.”-This verse alone disproves the Catholic assumption that Peter occupied the position of pope, taking the place of Christ as head of the church. Instead of that, he was subject to the decisions of the rest, going wherever the majority thought best. Nowhere in the Bible do we find any intimation that any one occupied a higher rank than the rest. The apostles did not even presume to dictate to the body of the church, as shown in chapter 5. And in this they simply acted in accordance with their own teaching, especially that of Peter himself, to take the oversight of the flock, not “as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock,” and to “be subject one to another.” 1 Peter 5:1-5. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.5}

The question is often asked, Is baptism a saving ordinance? If it is meant by this, Will baptism suffice to save a person, if he does nothing else? the answer must be, No. But if it is desired to know if baptism is necessary, the reply must be, Yes. If it were not necessary, it would not have been commanded. When the people inquired of the apostles, “What shall we do?” The answer was, “Repent, and be baptized.” Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” And from Philip’s preaching to the eunuch we learn that we cannot preached Christ without teaching baptism. The record simply says that Philip began at the 53rd of Isaiah where the eunuch was reading, “and preached unto him Jesus.” That was all; yet as they went on their way, the eunuch cried out, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.6}

The chapter which the eunuch was reading foretells in a vivid manner the trial and death of Jesus. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted.” “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” There is a force in this expression, for Christ was the antitypical lamb. “And he made his grave with the wicked.” This shows the burial of Christ; and the following verses show a resurrection, and the final joy of Christ as he sees those who have been redeemed by his blood. From this we can get an idea of what kind of an act the eunuch had in mind when he asked to be baptized. It must have been something that would have been suggested by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But sprinkling bears no resemblance whatever to these things. And it would have required a great deal of ingenuity on the part of Philip to so preach Christ that sprinkling would be naturally suggested. But he could very easily show how we show faith in Christ, by being “buried with him in baptism,” “planted” “in the likeness of his death.” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.7}

For this kind of baptism, water was needed, not a few drops merely, but “much water.” John 3:23. But for what is popularly known as baptism, only a few drops are required. In fact, we have seen the ceremony performed where it could not with any sort of propriety have been call sprinkling, since scarcely a drop of water was used; the administrator merely put his finger in a bowl that was supposed to contain water, and then touched the candidate’s forehead. But the eunuch would have had an abundance of water with him for drinking, sufficient for any such performance, or even for veritable sprinkling, and it would not have been necessary for them to get out of the chariot. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.8}

“But this was a desert place, and there could not have been enough water there for immersion,” it is sometimes objected. The word *ereemos* translated desert, means a wilderness, an uninhabited place, and not necessarily a barren country. An instance of its use is found in Matthew 14:13-19. The multitude were there with Jesus, and in a “desert place,” yet they were commanded to “sit down on the grass,” which proves that it was not a barren, sandy desert. As for the place in question, travelers say that on any route which they might have taken from Jerusalem to Gaza, there was an abundance of water. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.9}

One thought in connection with Philip’s sermon to the eunuch should be impressed on the mind of every one who labors in the cause of God. And that is that it is just as important to preach to small congregations as to large ones. If a minister preaches to a large congregation, and only one is finally converted, he has accomplished no more than if he had preached to that one alone. Here was Philip, a man “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,” capable of preaching to a “city congregation,” yet he was sent off to preach to one man; and he went out into the wilderness without any hesitation, not knowing that he would find even that one man. But how great were the consequences. The eunuch “went on his way rejoicing” in the new light that he had received, and, like the other disciples, he must have preached the word to those whom he met. And thus the Ethiopians heard the truth. It might have been more gratifying to Philip’s personal pride, if he had had any, to be sent on a mission to Ethiopia, but the result was accomplished by this trip to the desert. Two of Christ’s most instructive servants were preached to an audience of a single individual. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.10}

From the unenlightened Ethiopian, we may learn a lesson of diligence in the study of the word of God. He was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, and had been to worship in the place to which all Jews looked as the dwelling-place of God,-the temple at Jerusalem. The religion which he had adopted was a long step in advance of the superstition of his native country, still he felt that he was only a learner. He was searching the Scriptures, although they conveyed no meaning to his mind. But the promise is sure, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,” and Philip was sent to instruct him. But how many of us are there who would have been occupied as he was?How many are there who think to take the Bible with them on a journey, to read by the way? Yet this is what we are commanded to do. If the eunuch had not been reading the Bible, Philip would probably not have been sent to instruct him. Who can tell how many opportunities for receiving great light we may have missed, because we were not attentively spreading the word as we should. The Lord may not send any evangelist to our assistance, as he did to the eunuch, but his spirit is ever ready to enlighten us. What an encouragement this is for us to read even those portions of the Bible that are beyond our comprehension. E. J. W. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 257.11}

**“The Bible Displaced by Tradition” The Signs of the Times, 9, 22.**

E. J. Waggoner

In an editorial in the *Christian at Work*, a few weeks ago, there were some admissions in regard to the Sabbath that are too good to be passed by unnoticed. The article contrasts the former times with the present, claiming that precepts and customs that were good for people three thousand years ago are entirely out of place in this enlightened age. It deprecates the basing of moral duties to-day upon commands ever given when the world was in its infancy. Among other illustrations it uses the following:- {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.1}

“Even our higher moralists have made failures in this direction. Thus some plant the observance of the Sabbath [Sunday] squarely on the fourth commandment, which was an explicit injunction to observe Saturday, and no other day, as ‘a holy day unto the Lord.’” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.2}

Very good; that is what we have stoutly maintained, notwithstanding the fact that many religious teachers have labored hard to prove that the fourth commandment enjoins the observance of Sunday, or of any day which convenience may suggest. We are glad to have this frank expression of opinion from so able and influential a journal as the *Christian at Work*. Not that it adds anything to our faith, or tends to confirm us in our belief. When the Bible speaks as plainly on any point as it does on the observance of the seventh day of the week, we do not need anything additional. But the statement just quoted is good place against the assertions of those who claim to keep Sunday in obedience to the fourth commandment. A house divided against itself cannot stand; and when Sunday-keepers take such diametrically opposite positions in support of their pet institution, it is a pretty good indication that the foundations of that institution are very shaky. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.3}

We leave those who believe in keeping Sunday, and at the same time believe the whole of the moral law is binding upon all men, to settle this question with the *Christian at Work*, while we pass on to another point, which clashes with the teachings of another class of professors. Some professed Christians claim that God has yielded to the wishes of wicked men so far as to abolish his holy law, and that none of it is now binding. They care not what the commandment teaches, since they do not believe that it is in force. They claim to follow the apostles. Here is something that will be of interest to such persons:- {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.4}

“So some have tried to build the observance of Sunday upon apostolic command, or as the apostles gave no command on the matter at all.” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.5}

Good again; we could not tell it any straighter ourself. We are glad also of this frank admission; it always does us good to find something in religious journals with which we can agree. But right here it may occur to some that the Sunday seems to be left out entirely. If not commanded in either the Old Testament or the New, where shall we find authority for its observance? The *Christian at Work* is equal to the occasion, and continues:- {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.6}

“In the meantime, the fact that Sunday observance rests upon the custom of the early church, handed down through all the centuries-and which ought to be sufficient for every Christian-is lost sight of.” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.7}

Where else, to be sure, should we look for authority for Sunday observance but to tradition, since the Bible is silent concerning it? We admire the honesty of those who do not attempt to make the Bible responsible for that which it condemns, but we are not satisfied with the reasons offered; for, {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.8}

1. How do we know that it was the custom of the early church to observe Sunday, since the Bible is silent concerning it? There was no church before the one which was the result of the apostles’ preaching; but the Bible gives us an account of that, and says nothing about Sunday observance, as the *C. at W.* admits; so, according to its own admission, the earliest church did not keep Sunday. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.9}

2. And further, Allowing that the early Christians did keep Sunday, where did they get their authority? Not from the commandment of God, nor from that of the apostles. They must have devised it in their own heart. But why must we follow their example? Where do we learn that they were set as examples for us? If they could do as they please, why may not we? Why should we follow the example of the early Christians who kept Sunday, any more than that of the earliest Christians, who kept the Sabbath of the Lord? {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.10}

3. And, once more, If we are not to follow the plain teaching of the fourth commandment, why need we be so strict about obeying any of the other nine? Why may we not interpret any of them in as liberal a manner, or ignore them altogether, and do as we please in everything. If a minister of the gospel should blaspheme, or a deacon should systematically steal money from the church treasury, or a whole church should be guilty of violation of the seventh commandment, the *Christian at Work* would be one of the first to denounce such acts as sinful in the extreme; yet it will openly advise its readers to ignore the fourth commandment entirely. What is the reason? Why is not the fourth commandment as sacred as the third, the seventh, for the eighth? Let those answer who can. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.11}

But we must notice one more admission. Here it is:- {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.12}

“The truth is, so soon as we appeal to the *litera scripta* of the Bible, the Sabbatarians have the best of the argument.” {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.13}

We would like to have our good Presbyterian and Methodist and Baptist friends read that sentence several times, and then ask themselves the question, Shall we accept the Bible as our rule of faith and practice, or not? The Protestant rule is, “The Bible, and the Bible alone.” Shall we change this, or shall we cease to call ourselves Protestants? If we retain only so much of the Bible as it suits our ideas, why keep any of it? Are the lives of mortal men to be taken as a standard by which to test the Bible, or is the Bible the rule by which men’s actions are to be measured? If the latter, then it would seem absolutely necessary for us to follow the literal reading of the Scriptures. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.14}

The *Christian at Work* is professedly a Christian paper. Its proprietors and editors profess to be Christian men. It is run in the interest of a Christian denomination. Now where do they get their Christianity? Is it from the Koran, the Book of Mormon, or the daily newspaper? No, from the Bible. The Bible is the only place where Christianity is defined. Then what kind of Christianity will we have if we swing loose from the book? No Christianity at all. If we are not to take the *litera scripta* of the Bible in regard to the Sabbath, why should we take it in regard to the death and resurrection of Christ? May it not be that the passages that speak of those events do not mean what they say, or if they mean what they say, are of no consequence? But to claim that would be infidelity, says one. Ah! would it? Then pray tell what it is to say that the commandments of God may be set aside at pleasure? {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.15}

But we believe the Bible, and propose to take it just as it reads. Even the *Christian at Work* will hardly say that is not safe to follow Bible teachings strictly. The Bible will not lead us astray. As long as we stick to the Bible we are on the safe side. But when we leave it, we are adrift. We do not know where to go. We do not know of any man who is not liable to sin, so we dare not follow the example of men. We dare not follow the impulses of our own heart, for “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” And besides, we read that God will bring into Judgment, those who walked in the ways of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes. Ecclesiastes 11:9. And so we say again that we shall stick to the Bible, fully believing that man shall live by “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” E. J. W. {SITI June 7, 1883, p. 259.16}

**“The Sabbath-School. Acts 9:1-22” The Signs of the Times, 9, 24.**

E. J. Waggoner

**Lesson for Pacific Coast-June 30. Acts 9:1-22.  
Notes on the Lesson.**

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest.”-Literally he was “breathing threatening and slaughter;” he was not merely uttering threats, as “breathing out” would seem to signify, but he was giving all his strength to the work of persecuting the disciples. He not only breathed out slaughter, but he breathed it in; with each threat, or act, of persecution, his zeal increased. That which we breathe pervades the entire system; so the spirit of persecution had taken entire possession of Saul; it was for that purpose that he lived. This shows how entirely he gave himself to what he thought was duty; it also helps us to realize what an apparently unpromising subject he was, of which to make a humble disciple. {SITI June 21, 1883, p. 281.1}

What was it that transformed this relentless persecutor into an earnest, zealous Christian? A short sentence tells the whole story. He saw Jesus. It is not worth while to notice the discussions of commentators as to whether or not Saul did really see the Lord, except to wonder that such discussions ever could have taken place. Ananias said that the Lord appeared to him in the way, Acts 9:17, and he himself expressly says that he saw the Lord. 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8. But the high priest had also seen Jesus, and so had many of the Jews, yet they still remained unbelieving; the difference was that Saul was really desirous of serving God, all the others were not. One look at Christ was enough to show him his error, and turn all his energies in the opposite direction. There are many of us who profess to be honest in our desire to serve God, and yet we are not very active in the service. There is no such radical change visible in our lives, as was seen in Paul’s. Why is this? Perhaps we have not seen Jesus. We have not let our eyes rest upon the perfect pattern. It is not because we have not the opportunity, but because we lacked the purpose. Could we see him in the sufferings and shame that he endured for us, perhaps we too might lose sight of self, and run with patient continuance the race that is set before us, steadfastly “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” {SITI June 21, 1883, p. 281.2}

From Paul’s case we may learn what true conversion is. It is a direct turning around. His course after he had seen Jesus was exactly opposite to what it was before. His natural energy and zeal remained the same, but was turned into another channel. It would be a wonderful thing to see a stream that is rushing madly down the mountain-side, change its course, and flow in the opposite direction; but such a thing would be no more wonderful than is the change effected by the Spirit of God on the human heart. The daily life is the only test of conversion. {SITI June 21, 1883, p. 281.3}

It must be remembered also that Paul was not a heathen nor an infidel. He was an honored member of the church-the one that God had a specially designated as his own. Not only this, but he was one of the strictest in the performance of every duty. No doubt he would have scoffed at the idea that he needed conversion, yet he was ignorant of the essential element of true religion. May there not be many in our time who are in similar circumstances? The testing point now is the law of God, especially the fourth commandment. It is often said, “What you say about the Sabbath cannot be true, or our ministers and learned men would have found it out and told us.” Well, Saul was a leading man, familiar with the Bible, and he was ignorant of the truth; the high priest and his associates were the leaders in the church, the ministers of God, yet they harden their hearts against the truth. Is it any more to be wondered at that such a thing should happen now and then? The Bible says that just this state of things will exist in the last days. As it was then, so it is now, that the majority will continue to fight against the truth, instead of accepting and obeying and it. {SITI June 21, 1883, p. 281.4}

As soon as Paul had become a disciple he commenced preaching. He had found the truth, and he lost no time in proclaiming it to others. He was not content to be a silent disciple, he must sound a note of warning. His preaching, also, was not apologetic. Neither the dread of persecution nor the fear of displeasing wealthy Jews, could hinder him from preaching the plain truth. And so he “preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” {SITI June 21, 1883, p. 281.5}

What Saul did not say is worth notice, as well as what he did say. He did not say, “It makes no difference what a man believes, if he is only sincere.” There never was a more sincere man in the world than Paul, yet it made a great deal of difference what he believed. When he believed that the Christians were heretics, he persecuted them; but when he believed the truth, he strengthened them. He showed his sincerity by accepting the truth as soon as it was presented to him. He did not say, “Well my father and mother believed just as I do, and instructed me in this way; I cannot believe that they were wicked persons.” This is a very common excuse for not obeying the commandments of God, but Paul was not desirous of shielding himself by an excuse. Neither did he say, “If it is true that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, why have not the wise men of our church and nation found it out? Gamaliel never taught any such thing, and I don’t profess to be wiser than he. It is not for me to set myself up as knowing more than the elders of Israel.” Who can imagine Saul using such words to the Lord? How absurd and childish such excuses would have sounded. Yet there are hundreds of professors who are not ashamed to make just such frivolous excuses for not keeping the Sabbath of the Lord. They would hardly think of making them if they were talking to the Lord in person, as Saul was. No one should offer an excuse now, that he would be ashamed to offer at the Judgment. The Lord hears these excuses now, just the same as though they were addressed to him, and those who make them will have to meet them at the last day. E. J. W. {SITI June 21, 1883, p. 281.6}

**“The Sabbath-School. Acts 9:23-33; Galatians 1:13-18” The Signs of the Times, 9, 25.**

E. J. Waggoner

**Lesson for Pacific Coast-July 7. Acts 9:23-33; Galatians 1:13-18.  
Notes on the Lesson.**

There is no one thing that shows the brevity of the Scripture narrative more clearly than the account of the period immediately following Saul’s conversion, as given in the text. We read in Acts 9:22, 23, “But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him.” Then follows his escape from Damascus, and his arrival at Jerusalem. Now in reading this account, the casual reader would suppose that Saul spent those “many days” in Damascus, teaching in the synagogues. It is only by an incidental remark in Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, that we learn that the “many days” were three years, and that a part of this time (how much we do not know) was spent in Arabia. There is not the slightest discrepancy between Luke’s history and the statement of Paul. Luke merely passes by this event, as he does many others, because it is not absolutely necessary to the object for which he wrote. He was not writing a minute history of Paul’s life, any more than the evangelists professed to write a minute account of Christ’s earthly ministry. {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.1}

Prof. Wm. Green, of Princeton, in writing on the book of Joshua, and noticing how very brief history is, and what a small portion of Joshua’s was life is recorded, makes the following general statement, which applies to all Bible history:- {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.2}

“The sacred history is never merely an annalistic record. It traces the development of God’s earthly kingdom, and the progress of his scheme of grace. Events, which have no bearing upon this theme, however interesting they might be from other points of view, do not come within the scope of the Bible narrative. The long residence of Israel and Egypt, and thirty-eight out of the forty years’ wandering in the desert, contributed nothing to the purpose for which the history was written. The silence of the historian respecting them creates no gap or unaccountable break in the narrative. It clearly shows the steadfastness with which the plan adopted was adhered to.” {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.3}

It is necessary to bear this fact in mind in reading the Scriptures. If all did so, it would save much confusion. For instance, in the first and second chapters of Genesis we have the record of the creation, and the setting apart of the seventh day as the Sabbath. But the Sabbath is not mentioned again till we come to the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, a connection with the events that occurred twenty-five hundred years after the creation. Now we are not to conclude from this that the Sabbath was unknown during all that period. Such a conclusion would be the farthest from the truth. The sacred historian has this one object in: To trace briefly the history of God’s people, and show the course that God took preserve a knowledge of himself in the earth. It must be remembered that these events were not jotted down as memoranda at the time of their occurrence; they were all written by one man, and although they cover so long a period of time, they are condensed into the smallest space; the entire history was doubtless written in a short space of time. The historian records the command, in Genesis 2:2, 3, to keep the Sabbath. When God gives a command, there is no other supposition but that it is to be, and will be, obeyed; so the writer hastens on, and again refers to the Sabbath when he reaches the point where it is again made the subject of legislation. The entire account may have been written, for aught we know, in a few days, or even a few hours. It may not be out of place to state that, having recorded the command of God in regard to the Sabbath, the silence of the sacred narrative on this subject, for so long a period, is *prima facie* evidence that it was observed during all that period. So strong is this evidence that he who disputes it is bound to give a reason for his denial; but no reason can be given. {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.4}

But to return to the immediate subject of the lesson. For what purpose did Saul go into Arabia? There are two opinions in regard to this question. Some think that he went to carry the gospel to the heathen in that region. The other it is that he went there for a season of quiet meditation and communion with God, before he entered upon his life-work; that it was at this time that he received some, at least, of those wonderful revelations of which he speaks. We regard the latter opinion as the only tenable one, for the following reason:- {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.5}

1. It was not till after Saul’s return to Jerusalem that he was set apart for the ministry to the Gentiles. The disciples did not yet fully comprehend the fact that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. It required a special vision from the Lord to overcome Peter’s scruples against associating with the Gentiles, and it was only when he related the vision in full, and told how that, without the ordinary ceremony of laying on of hands, the Holy Ghost had been bestowed on them, that the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem were reconciled to his course. Now when we consider the feeling against Paul, on account of his work among the Gentiles, even after he had been ordained for that especial purpose, we cannot suppose that he would have been received if he had engaged in it before receiving his ordination. {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.6}

2. The connection of which Paul mentions his visit into Arabia, throws much light on the object of that visit. He begins his letter to the Galatians, thus: “Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead),” etc. Again, in verses 11, 12, he says: “For I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” And then he says: “But when it pleased God.... to reveal his Son to me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord’s brother.” And he still farther states that when he went into Syria and Cilicia, he was “unknown by face unto the churches of Judea.” {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.7}

Now what is the object of all the statements? Simply that he may establish his authority as a true apostle of Jesus Christ. The apostles were all men who accompanied Jesus from the beginning of his ministry, and were familiar with his teachings and practice. See Acts 1:21, 22. It was therefore necessary that Paul, to be equal with the other apostles, should be sent forth by the Lord himself, and not receive his knowledge of Christ at second hand. To show that this was the case, is the object of Paul in this first chapter of Galatians; and as positive proof, he states that after he was converted, instead of conferring with (*i.e.*, receiving instruction from) flesh and blood, he went into Arabia. Surely the object of his visit could not be more clearly stated. {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.8}

This fact is of interest, not merely as an item of history, but as showing the source of apostolic authority, and the value of apostolic practice. None of the apostles claim to have any power or authority of themselves. Paul especially repeats, again and again, that his teaching was not of himself, or of man, but of Christ. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,” is his declaration to the Thessalonians. The apostles were simply Christ’s representatives, caring on the work as they had seen him do it. If they deviated from this in the least, they were culpable. Thus Paul says: “But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” As an evidence that the apostles were not infallible, we learn that Peter, was guilty of dissimulation, Galatians 2:11-14, and that Paul himself engaged in sharp contention with a fellow apostle, Acts 15:37-40. As Dr. Lyman Abbott says, “It is not the practice of the apostles, but their teaching, that we are to follow;” and we might add, as Paul himself did, that their teaching is of authority only because it agrees with that of Christ. {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.9}

What then, we ask, becomes of the argument for Sunday observance, based upon a change which is pretended was made by the apostles? No one has yet had the boldness to claim that Christ ever kept Sunday, or ever taught its observance. It was his custom to worship on the Sabbath day. See Luke 4:16. Neither did he teach disregard for the Sabbath, but only for the senseless restrictions imposed by the Pharisees. On the contrary he taught his disciples to obey his commandments even as he obeyed his Father’s commandments. John 15:10; and his and the Father’s commandments were identical. John 12:49. Christ, then, taught, both by precept and practice, the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Taking all these things into consideration, we find that apostolic license for Sunday-keeping resolves itself into this: Even if the apostles had commanded it, or practiced it themselves (which they did not do), such precept or practice would have had no authority whatever, since it would have been contrary to the teaching and practice of Christ. E. J. W. {SITI June 28, 1883, p. 293.10}