**“The Sabbath-School. Acts 15:32-41; 16:1-34” The Signs of the Times, 9, 34.**

E. J. Waggoner

**Lesson for Pacific Coast.-Sept. 15. Acts 15:32-41; 16:1-34.
NOTES ON THE LESSON.**

Immediately after the council at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, accompanied by Judas and Silas, who were prophets and delivered to the church the decision of the apostles and elders. After performing his mission, Judas returned to Jerusalem, but Silas chose to remain in Antioch. “Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.” V. 35. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.1}

Among the others who were at Antioch was Peter. This we learn from Galatians 2. At this time an incident occurred that ill accords with the Catholic dogma of the supremacy of Peter in the church. From Paul’s statement to the Galatians we learn that Peter, in accordance with the decision of the council at Jerusalem, and with his practice before that time (Acts 11:3), mingled freely with the Gentiles, and ate with them. But as soon as some Jews came down from Jerusalem, “he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.” Galatians 2:13. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.2}

This was not done for the purpose of saving a weak brother from stumbling, but from fear of the accusations which the Jews might bring against him. It was a slight manifestation of the spirit which had moved him to deny his Lord. His act was contagious, many of the Jews doing likewise, and even “Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” “They walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.” Then it was that Paul “withstood him to the face,” saying before them all, “If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Jews, why compellest thou of the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?” Having thus fully exposed Peter’s dissimulation, he showed that forms and ceremonies are lost in faith in Christ. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.3}

It is not likely that there were any hard feelings on either side. Paul simply did his duty, and Peter readily acknowledged his fault. But how can our Catholic friends harmonize this affair with the theory that Peter occupied the same position in regard to the early church that the pope does to the Catholic Church? Imagine Cardinal Newman addressing Leo XIII. As Paul did Peter. If he should dare to do such a thing it is very certain that the pope would not take it so meekly as Peter did. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.4}

From the account of the dispute between Paul and Barnabas, Dr. Barnes draws the following lesson:- {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.5}

“This account proves that there was no *collusion* or *agreement* among the apostles to impose on mankind. Had there been such an agreement, and had the books of the New Testament been an imposter, the apostles would have been represented as perfectly harmonious, and as united in all their views and efforts. What imposter would have thought of the device of representing the early friends of the Christian religion as *divided* and *contending*, and *separating* from each other? Such a statement has an air of candor and honesty, and at the same time is so apparently against the truth of the system that no imposter would have thought of resorting to it.” {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.6}

We have here an opportunity to test the value of mere apostolic example for any custom. Peter dissimulated, and Paul and Barnabas indulged in heated contention. Now many profess to base their observance of Sunday on the example of the apostles. To be sure they cannot prove that any of the apostles ever kept Sunday, since the Bible nowhere intimates that they did, but no matter; that does not affect the popular claim. They can point to one religious meeting held on Sunday, Acts 20:7, and Paul was there. From this they build on the following: “The apostles kept Sunday (as we infer), the majority of the world now keep Sunday, therefore it *must* be right.” Reasoning on the same scale, we derive this: “The apostles contended (as we *know*); an overwhelming majority of the world also dispute and quarrel to a greater or less degree; therefore quarreling is right, and we ought to engage in it.” The truth is, it is not the apostles’ practice, but their teaching, that we are to follow; and even their teaching would be invalid if it did not agree with that part of the Scripture that was already written. It is easy to find a precedent for any wrong practice, if that is all that is desired. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.7}

It would seem that one would need only to read the arguments in favor of infant baptism, drawn from verses 15 and 33 of chapter 16, to be convinced that that custom has no solid foundation whatever on which to rest. For instance, Dr. Barnes says on verse 15:- {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.8}

“‘And her household.’ Greek, her house; (*ho oikos autes*), her family, no mention is made of *their* having believed, and the case is one that affords a strong presumptive proof that this was an instance of *household* or infant baptism. For (1) her believing is particularly mentioned. (2) It is not intimated that they believed. (3) It is manifestly implied that *they* were baptized because *she* believed. It was the offering of her family to the Lord. It is just such an account as would now be given of a household or family that were baptized on the faith of the parent.” {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.9}

But what right has the Dr. to say, “household or infant baptism”? Is a household necessarily composed exclusively of infants? If “household” and “infants” are, as he implies, synonymous terms, then wherever the word occurs it means only infants, to the exclusion of adults, and that is absurd. A household is simply those dwelling under the same roof; and, although Dr. Clarke says, “We can scarcely suppose that the whole families of Lydia and the jailer had no children in them,” we have known of many households in which there was not a child under ten years of age, and such cases were not considered remarkable. Dr. Clarke seems to have forgotten that although infants are children, children are not necessarily infants. We firmly believe in the right of children to be baptized when they are old enough to express a desire for that ordinance, but this is not infant baptism. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.10}

But, leaving conjecture, what warrant is there for saying of the household of Lydia that since “it is not intimated that they believed, it is manifestly implied that they were baptized because *she* believed”? Christ in commissioning the apostle said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” The apostles placed believing and baptism together, as shown by Acts 2:38 and 8:37. John the Baptist also refused to baptize the unbelieving and unrepentant Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew 3:7-10. To suppose that they baptized any who did not believe, is to claim that they violated their commission. And even if they had done so, what profit would have been to those so baptized? Christ said, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” The mere ceremony of baptism confers no blessing on any. For an unbeliever to be baptized is solemn mockery. Those who do not believe will be lost whether they had been baptized or not. The terrible delusion of the ancient Jews, and of the modern Catholics as well, was in ascribing virtue to a round of ceremonies performed without one thought of that which they symbolize. Protestantism has largely followed in the same path, and as a consequence the church is burdened with nominal professors, who have no just appreciation of the principles of the gospel, and to base their hope of salvation on the mere fact that they have been baptized. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.11}

After all, Dr. Clarke, in his comments on verse 32, dares make no stronger statement in favor of infant baptism than that “it is *pretty evident* that we have in this chapter *presumptive evidence* that children were received into the church in this way,“ *i.e.*, by infant baptism, so called. One would hardly expect that that sage conclusion was preceded in the same paragraph by this statement concerning the jailer. “And appears that he and his whole family, who were capable of receiving instruction, embraced this doctrine, and show the sincerity of their faith by immediately receiving baptism. From this we conclude that the Doctor found it difficult to bring his reason and his prejudices into harmony. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.12}

We can only ask, in leaving this subject, Why do the advocates of infant baptism indulgence such absurd conjectures, which, as we have seen, often directly contradict the Scriptures, if they have any direct Bible authority to offer in support of the custom? {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.13}

It is sometimes asked, “Why did Paul rebuke the damsel possessed of the Spirit, since she told nothing but the truth?” We answer: For that very reason. Had she heaped abuse upon the apostles, it would not have been had so damaging to them. For (1) the Jews who were in the city would conclude from her testimony in favor of the apostles that they were moved by the same spirit that she was, and would therefore be hardened against the gospel; and (2) the Gentiles would also naturally conclude that the teachings of both were a part of the same system, and that therefore they had nothing to learn from the apostles. Her testimony was calculated to bring the gospel into bad repute. The truth always suffers more from the professed friendship of wicked men than from there enmity. A man who professes Christianity, and still lives contrary to its teachings, brings reproach upon it; and the more loudly he declares his belief, the more does the cause suffer. Christians may well rejoice when they are the subjects of calumny by wicked men. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.14}

The only record we have of Paul’s singing was when he was in the jail at Philippi, lying on the cold floor, his back bruised and bloody from the “many stripes” it had received. At midnight they “prayed and sang praises unto God.” With what propriety he could afterwards exhort the Philippians to “be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God,” and what weight his testimony must have had. He had set them an example of “rejoicing in tribulation.” Without any misgivings he could say to them, “Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and seen in me, do;” and we are not surprised that the believers at this time were the most faithful of any of Paul’s converts. They prayed for light, before Paul was sent to them, and they did not refuse to accept it when it brought persecution. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 401.15}

**“The Honor Due to God. No. 6” The Signs of the Times, 9, 34.**

E. J. Waggoner

We have already noticed the temporal blessings that are promised to those who honor God in the matter of tithes and offerings. It may be said that there are those who have given liberally and yet are in somewhat reduced circumstances. There may be various reasons for this. It must be remembered that the payment of tithes and offerings is only a part of the honor due to God. Those persons may be neglecting some other duty equally necessary. But, more than all, we must remember that God does not settle his accounts every year; neither does he promise to pay entirely in this world’s coin. There is a reward of a more enduring nature, of which we shall speak particularly. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.1}

Notwithstanding the fact that God’s people are often “the poor of this world,” they are never left to suffer in this life. Christ exhorts us not to be anxious in regard to what we shall eat, drink, and wear, significantly adding, “For your heavenly Father knoweth that he had need of these things.” So long as he remembers it, what need have we to fear. Then the Lord says: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:30-33. In the face of this promise, whoever spends time worrying or fretting shows his disbelief in God. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.2}

We should never forget that we are placed on this earth for no other purpose than to glorify God. See Revelation 4:11; 1 Corinthians 10:31. Most people seem to think that the sole duty of man is to provide for himself, leaving God out of the question entirely; and even many who recognize the fact that God has claims upon them, think that “we must make a living.” Not so; we must glorify God, and this must be our first, and, indeed, our only object; and since we cannot provide for ourselves, but must depend upon God for all our temporal supplies, it stands to reason that by serving him faithfully our prospects for a *continued* supply of at least the necessaries of life, is better than if we ignored him. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.3}

Christ’s parable in Luke 12:15-21, shows what a man will lose by a failure to make the glory of God the first thing in all his calculations. What we have stated above agrees with the words of verse 15, that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” This is illustrated by the cases of the man whose barns were insufficient to contain the abundant produce of his field. After considering the matter, he decides thus: “This will I do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine these, eat, drink, and be merry.” {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.4}

“A wise course; a prudent man,” says the worldling, “But God said to him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?” Foolishness, in the Bible, is but another name for wickedness. See Psalm 38:4-6; 107:17; Proverbs 1:7, 32; 3:35; 14:9; Romans 1:21-23, etc. What wicked thing had this man then, that he should be thus condemned? He had not defrauded his neighbor, for his wealth was due solely to the fruitfulness of his farm. Without doubt he had been counted an upright man in the community. But Inspiration says that the fool is he that “hath said in his heart, There is no God.” That was just this man’s position. He might not have been an infidel; he may even have been a church member; but in all his plans he acted as though there was no God in the universe. He proclaimed more loudly than by words that he had no faith in God’s power to protect. In his heart he did not believe in a kind, heavenly Father, and therefore he did not show any gratitude. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.5}

But the words of verse 21 are what should startle everyone of us. After telling the fate of the rich man, the Lord says: “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” We may not be so successful in laying up treasure as was the rich man, and yet have the same desire. One says, “I am too poor too pay tithes; I am in debt, and it will take all I can possibly turn to meet my expenses.” This is only another way of saying, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?” It comes from a failure to recognize that we are more deeply in debt to God than we ever can be to any man, and that his claim is paramount to all others. There are many other ways in which we can show that we know of nothing better than “getting on in the world” by “looking out for number one;” but we leave each to make the application for himself. But let this Scripture ring in our ears: “So is he that layeth [or striveth to lay] up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” The lesson so forcibly taught by this parable is that he who would enter Heaven must first place on deposit there a portion of his earthly gains. The same thing is positively asserted by Paul in 1 Timothy 6:17-19. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.6}

This is more completely shown in the parable of the unjust steward, Luke 16:1-9, to a brief explanation of which we invite the reader’s careful attention. To bring the parable more vividly before the reader, we quote it entire:- {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.7}

“(1) There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. (2) And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. (3) Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. (4) I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. (5) So he called every one of his lord’s debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? (6) And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. (7) Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. (8) And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. (9) And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of [by means of, R.V.] the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.8}

The force of this parable is usually much weakened by the assumption that the steward provided for his future wants by defrauding his lord of a portion of the various amounts due him. But this is a misapprehension of the text. No lord would commend a servant for embezzling property, nor call him wise for such a simple, easily-discovered piece of rascality. The lord knew what was due him, and would have arrested the steward, instead of complimenting him, if he had done what he is commonly supposed to have done. It was not for this transaction that he is called unjust, but for his unfaithfulness, for which he was discharged. What the steward actually did was this: Having ascertained how much rental was due from one man, he said to him, “You need pay only half of that; I will make up the rest out of my own pocket.” And so he paid a part of the indebtedness to each of his lord’s debtors, putting them all under lasting obligation to him. Here is where his wisdom was shown. He saw that the money which he had saved would support him but a short time, and then he would be destitute. So instead of hoarding up what he had, deriving a scant living from it, and then becoming penniless, he spent it all at once, but in such a way as to ensure his support for the rest of his life; for those whom he thus befriended would gladly receive him into their houses. See verses 4. Now for the application: Our Saviour exhorts us to make to ourselves friends by means of this worldly treasure that we have, so that at last we may be received into everlasting habitations. This will be done by giving to the cause of God, and to the poor. To some it seems the height of foolishness for a man to “give away” his earnings, but the result will prove that it is the only wise plan. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.9}

A little illustration will show how the children of this world that may be in their generation wiser than the children of light. Suppose that A and B have each the same amount of money, and that A knows that he will live forty years, while B has the promise of only ten years more of life. B invests his money in such a way that the principal and interest will keep him just ten years-till his death. A invests his in exactly the same manner, so that it also will last just the same length of time. Now which is the wiser of these two men? You say at once, “B; for although A has pursued the same course, he has not looked far enough ahead, and will finally become bankrupt.” Now Christians have a knowledge of the world to come, a promise of everlasting life. But the worldling knows only of this world, and has no hope beyond this life. If, then, a Christian uses his money just as his worldly neighbor does his, making the same investments, and does not honor God with his substance, is he not by far the more foolish of the two? Certainly; for the worldling makes plans for all the time of which he has any knowledge, while the Christian, expecting to live through eternity, plans only for time, with every prospect of becoming bankrupt at last. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 403.10}

Let no one accuse us of teaching that men can gain a home in Heaven simply by the payment of a little money. This alone will avail nothing; but the Bible plainly teaches that without this no one can enter Heaven. And there is reason in this, as in all God’s requirements. Although eternal life is the gift of God through Christ, it will not be bestowed upon us unless we gain the victory over our sins. God could not admit us to Heaven with our sins upon us, nor could we be happy if he did. But selfishness is at the bottom of all sin (See 2 Timothy 3:1-5), and no one can enter Heaven with the least taint of it about him. Christ is our pattern, and he was so unselfish as to give his life for his enemies. It is because we are so saturated with selfishness that we cannot appreciate pure unselfishness, as manifested by Christ. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 404.1}

Now the Lord desires to draw us out of ourselves, and lead us to think less of ourselves than of others, to be humble, to have the charity that “seeketh not her own,”-in short, to have us develop characters exactly the opposite of what the world admires. Denying ourselves, making sacrifices, tends to produce just such a character. At the same time, our interest in heavenly things is increased. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” When we give to the cause of God, we have an interest in it, and thus giving quickens us spiritually. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 404.2}

In proof of this last statement, we refer the reader once more to the 3rd of Malachi. After God, through the prophet, had denounced the sin of the people in withholding tithes and offerings, and had exhorted them to bring all the tithes into the store-house, and see if he would not increase their earthly store, and pour out a blessing till there would not be room to receive it, he almost immediately added: “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.” A natural consequence; men who invest in mining stocks, think and talk about mines; those who have their money in the railroad’s stock, have their minds on railroads, and can talk of but little else; and, in like manner, those who have their treasure in the bank of Heaven, cannot do otherwise than talk of the security that is given. If any one will look about him he will become convinced that the zealous ones in the church,-those who can always be depended on as being at their posts, on the right side of every question,-are not those who rob God in tithes and offerings. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 404.3}

But while it is a fact that those who do not fear God enough to render to him his due, do not speak “often” one to another, we know that they do *sometimes*. But to what purpose? Let us read the remainder of verse 16: “They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and *the Lord harkened and heard it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.” Then the Lord does not hear and record the testimony of those who do not fear him, no matter how their lack of reverence is shown. See also Luke 6:46. This is a solemn thought, and should cause us all to search our ways. The last two verses of this chapter, it will be seen, are in harmony with the ideas advanced in this article: “And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 404.4}

We might multiply evidence on these points, but these articles were not designed to be exhaustive on this subject. Enough has been given to show that our substance and the first-fruits of our increase are by no means the least among the means by which we must honor God. Do not think, dear reader, that you can atone for the neglect of one duty by the strictest performance of another, or that God will likely pass by any failure to give him the honor which he is so worthy to receive; and remember that these words of the Lord are as true now as when first uttered: “Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise thee shall be lightly esteemed.” E. J. W. {SITI September 6, 1883, p. 404.5}

**“The Sabbath-School. Acts 16:35-40; 17:1-20, and 17:20-34” The Signs of the Times, 9, 35.**

E. J. Waggoner

**Lessons for Pacific Coast.-Sept. 22 and 29.
Acts 16:35-40; 17:1-20, and 17:20-3.
NOTES ON THE LESSON.**

NOTE.-The Sabbath-school notes this week were written at the camp-meeting, under circumstances not the most favorable, as we did not have the *Instructor* containing the lesson, and our time was quite fully occupied with other duties. Since there was no paper last week, we thought best to briefly pass over both lessons, as there were points in the lesson that would have been omitted, upon which we wish to comment. Other points would be noticed if we had space. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.1}

There are those who think more of apostolic example than they do of the commandments of God. We do not believe that they that were sent were greater than He who sent them, therefore we give the commandments of God and Christ (which are always the same) preference. But we believe in following the example of the apostles in the main, because they were usually exactly right. Acts 17:2 presents a practice which we believe in following. When Paul came to Thessalonica he found a congregation of the Jews; “And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.” From this we learn that Paul was in the habit of observing the Sabbath. We are not surprised at this, for he himself said, “I delight in a law of God.” Compare this statement in regard to Paul’s custom with the fact that we have the record of only one sermon preached by Paul upon the first day of the week, and that upon that same first day he traveled twenty miles. Upon which side is the weight of apostolic example? We shall have more on this point hereafter. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.2}

It is interesting to notice Paul’s method of preaching. He “reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered,” etc. He did not use a single text as an excuse for reading a learned essay, or delivering an eloquent oration, but he preached the Bible itself. The Bible was his text-book, and he studied it with his congregation. And he did not present his views in an apologetic manner. He knew what the Bible taught, and believed it; and there was no guess-work about the matter. He presented the truths of God’s word as facts. It is this sort of preaching that wins souls if anything will, and it was so in this case. Many believed; “of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.3}

But envy had possession of many of the Jews, so that facts had no weight with them. They attempted to do by force what they were unable to do by legitimate argument. They “took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort” and made an uproar, trying to destroy Paul and Silas. This move was ostensibly in the interest of religion, yet they were willing to accept the assistance of the lowest rabble. No doubt these lewd fellows took great credit to themselves for the zeal which they manifested in the cause of religion. In their minds that act would atone for all the profligacy of which they had been guilty, and that in which they proposed to indulge. When men can be religious by persecuting the righteous, all the wicked suddenly become converted. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.4}

“And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.” Well, if that is what they had been doing, ought they not to have been stopped? What business had Paul and Silas to go around stirring up the people? Just this right: The Lord had sent them out with a special message of truth for the people. Their only work was to deliver their message. If people rejected it, and grew angry at them, that was none of their business. Indeed, that is just what they were taught to expect. The Saviour said, “For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against for mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Matthew 10:35, 36. It was not because Christ loved strife, that he said this; but he had come to speak the truth, and he knew that the truth would cause division. Men who reject the truth will ever be opposed to those who, by accepting the truth, condemn them. We hear men deprecating the preaching of Sabbath reform, because it causes divisions. Such ones would have used all their energy to choke down Paul, had they lived in his day, for he stirred up more strife than any other man of whom we have any knowledge. Yet these persons profess to believe in Paul. We are strongly reminded of Matthew 23:29-31. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.5}

When Paul and Silas were forced to leave Thessalonica, they came to Berea, where also there was a congregation of Jews, of whom Luke says: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they receive to the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Here we have true nobility, according to the Bible standard. It is now considered a mark of wisdom and honor to doubt the word of God, and to criticize and try to pick flaws in it; but God decides differently. “Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” The words “more noble” mean literally “of better birth”; so those who with meekness receive the word of God into good and honest hearts are of far higher birth than those who despise it, since they are the sons and daughters of God. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.6}

They “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” What Scriptures did a search? The Old Testament-the only Scriptures they had. What things were Paul and Silas preaching? The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth-his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and second advent. Then, since these Bereans searched the Old Testament to find out the truth of the apostle’s preaching, it must be that they referred them to that same book. Then it must be, also, that the gospel is found in the Old Testament as well as in the New. And so it is, for Paul says that the Gospel was preached to Abraham, and he lived many hundred years before any of the New Testament was written. Indeed, although we have the New Testament, we could not be certain that it is true, or that Christ is the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, if it were not for the Old Testament. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.7}

It is worth while also to notice how the Bereans studied the Scriptures. They searched them *daily*. Nothing but daily study of the word will give a person an understanding of its truths. And they studied with an object; they desired to find out if those things were so. And we may well suppose that, since they searched for this purpose, it was their firm intention to accept the teaching of Paul and Silas, if they were found. To be true and this is proved by the next verse: “Therefore, many of them believed.” This would be the case now if men would search the Scriptures; but as it was then so now, the majority prefer to search tradition, for the testimonies of the fathers, or science (falsely so called), or if they do search the Scriptures, they do so with a spirit of caviling and doubt, and do not, like the noble Bereans, receive the word “with all readiness of mind.” {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.8}

When Paul came to Athens, his spirit was stirred, powerfully agitated, because he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, or full of idols. Athens was then the metropolis of the world, the seat of all learning and art. It no doubt had more in it to attract the eye than all the rest of the world. Livy says that it “was full of the images of gods and men, adorned with every variety of material, and with all the skill of art.” Another writer humorously said that “it was easier to find a god than a man there.” Paul was educated and refined; he doubtless had an eye for the beautiful, both in nature and art. But his was the true culture and refinement-the culture that comes from an acquaintance with God. The vanities of Athens had no attraction for him. He could think only of the one thing-that all these were leading from God. How many Christians are there at the present time who, like Paul, are agitated over the wickedness that abounds, rather than attracted by and lost in admiration for the splendor which is often only a covering for vice? In this age of the world especially the Christian has something far greater to attract the attention than mere sight-seeing. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.9}

“Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him.” The Epicureans derived their name from Epicurus, who lived about 300 years before Christ. “They denied that the world was created by God, and that the gods exercised any care or providence over human affairs, and also the immortality of the soul. [They denied all future existence.] One of the distinguishing doctrines of Epicurus was that pleasure was the *summum bonum*, or chief good, and that virtue was to be practiced only as it contributed to pleasure.” It is easy to see to what practices such doctrines would lead. The Stoics believed that the universe was created by God, but that all things were fixed by fate; that even God was under the dominion of fate. It will be readily seen that Paul’s teaching would be diametrically opposed to such doctrines as these. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.10}

We should not fail to notice the adroitness and skill with which Paul introduced his subject. The philosophers had said, “He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods.” Now the Athenians were very jealous of the worship of their gods. Pausanias says that they greatly surpassed all others in their zeal for religion. It was dangerous for anyone to speak against their idol worship. About 400 years before, Socrates, one of their own philosophers, the wisest and most highly esteemed of any among them, had been put to death because they thought he was unsettling the minds of the young, and teaching disrespect for the gods. Now if Paul had introduced this subject bluntly, it is doubtful if he would have allowed to speak at all. Thus he would have defeated his own purpose. So he took them on their own ground. He said, “I perceive that ye are somewhat superstitious.” The word “superstitious,” as used here, means “excessively religious.” He had seen an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown God;” so he said, “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” They could find no fault with him for teaching them more perfectly concerning a god whom they professed to worship. But this means he was able to preach to them further, “Jesus and the resurrection.” Paul showed on this occasion the wisdom of the serpent, in winning souls to Christ, as the apostles had been commanded. Those who labor in these days would do well to learn a lesson from this. And yet, how many are there who would not compromise the truth should they be placed in Paul circumstances, and attempt to do this as he did? {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.11}

It was only lately that we noticed a criticism on Paul, because he did not preach Christ, but attempted to convince the Athenians by science. He must be a very careless reader who could make such a criticism. It is not to be supposed, of course, that we have the whole report of Paul’s sermon, for it would not have taken him two minutes to deliver it. This report gives only the heads of his discourse. It is a perfectly legitimate thing to prove the existence of God, from nature, and this is what Paul did. Having proved the existence of God, and his nature, he introduced the gospel in these words: God “now commandeth all men everywhere to respect; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, and that he hath raised him from the dead.” We do not think a more powerful gospel sermon could been preached than Paul preached at Athens. E. J. W. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 413.12}

**“Review of Sermon on the ‘Christian Sabbath’” The Signs of the Times, 9, 35.**

E. J. Waggoner

A few weeks since we received a copy of the Stockton (Cal.) *Independent*, which contained the synopsis of a sermon on “The Christian Sabbath, and the Abrogation of the Jewish Sabbath,” by Rev. W. T. Fleenor, pastor of the First Baptist Church of that city. Having received several requests to review the sermon, we decided to do so, but have been hindered hitherto by press of other matter. We offer no apology for the number of articles that appear in the SIGNS, nor even for repeating arguments again and again; for we believe the Sabbath reform is the message for this time, and we know that “precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here all little and their little.” {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 415.1}

The most unpleasant part of the work, is that of reviewing articles or sermons in opposition to the truth, because (1) The arguments urged against the Sabbath are so weak and puerile, and so self-contradictory that it seems almost a waste of time to notice them; and (2) We do not like to *seem* to be finding fault with others, when we have no personal feeling in the matter at all. We do so, however, because arguments that appear very weak to those familiar with Bible truth may seem strong to others, who have heard little or nothing of the evidence in favor of the Sabbath of the Lord. And these arguments, weak though they may be, often afford an excellent opportunity to bring out the strait testimony of the Bible. But that we may save space, in this instance, we will not repeat all the arguments which the speaker brought forward, but will simply present the Bible evidence of the truth that have been assailed. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 415.2}

There is no fact more susceptible of proof than that the Sabbath began at the close of the creation week, and that the first Sabbath commandment was spoken at that time. Notice the following points: 1. “Sabbath,” as is generally known, means “rest;” it is nothing more than the Hebrew word for ‘rest.” 2. When God had completed his work in six days, and pronounced everything very good, he rested on the seventh day. Genesis 2:1-3: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” If “Sabbath” means “rest,” then this text plainly declares that God made the Sabbath at the close of the first week of time; for he not only rested, but he blessed the day of his rest and sanctified it, or set it apart for a holy use. 3. Our Saviour declared that “the Sabbath was made for man;” it was not given to man centuries after it was made, but it was *made for him;* it was designed for his especial use. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 415.3}

Again, to sanctify is to set apart. God sanctified the seventh day; from what did he set it apart? From the other days of the week. This was a part of the work of making the Sabbath. Now to say that the Lord made the Sabbath for man, and set it apart for his use, and yet told him nothing about it, is to charge God with folly. We do not see how the evidence could be any clearer than it is, that in the beginning, in Eden, God commanded men to keep the Sabbath. The “Speaker’s Commentary” says on Genesis 2:3: “The natural interpretation of these words is that the blessing of the Sabbath was immediately consequent on the first creation of man, for whom the Sabbath was made.” {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 415.4}

The record says that “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” Our objector says: “The seventh day of what? Not of the week, for the days of creation were long periods of time. No one can keep that day.” We say that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day of the week, and none other. The commandment, Exodus 20:8-11. teaches us that we are to keep holy the Sabbath-day, because God rested upon and hallowed it. We are to rest upon the same day upon which God rested. What day of the week this was may be learned from Luke 23:54-56; 24:1. The women who followed Jesus to the tomb “returned and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath-day *according to the commandment*.” Then whatever day of the week they kept, was the day of the week which the commandment enjoins. That must be admitted by all. The very next day (Matthew 28:1) they came again to the sepulcher. This visit was made on “the first day of the week;” consequently the day previous-the Sabbath according to the commandment-was the seventh day of the week. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 415.5}

The days of creation were literal days of twenty-four hours each. 1. They were days composed of an evening and a morning. Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31. 2. There were days over which the sun and moon were made to rule. Genesis 1:16. 3. As above stated, God commanded men to rest upon the day that he did. To claim, then, that that day was a long, indefinite period of time, is to charge God with trifling with man. The theory of an indefinite period of time for creation, is the offering of “science falsely so called” to the cause of infidelity. No proof for such a theory can be brought forward; it rest solely on infidel conjecture. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 415.6}

It is urged that we do not find the patriarchs keeping the Sabbath; that for a period of 2500 years no mention is made of the Sabbath. The men who make this objection seem to think that the book of Genesis is a diary kept by the patriarchs, and that Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, each contributed to the complete history of his own time. Nothing could be further from the truth. The book of Genesis contains the history of 2500 years, the events have all taken place. It was written to show God’s plan in regard to mankind, and to trace the genealogy of Christ. The record does not state that Enoch, or Noah, or Abraham refrained from blasphemy and theft, but we do not therefore conclude that these men were thieves and blasphemers; neither have we any reason to conclude that they were Sabbath-breakers, because particular mention is not made concerning each one that he kept the Sabbath. God had given the Sabbath commandment; to say, then, that a certain man was a good man is equivalent to saying that he kept the Sabbath. Of Enoch and Noah is said that they “walked with God,” and of Abraham that he kept God’s commandments, statutes and laws. But even if no one from Adam to Moses had observed the Sabbath, it would not have affected God’s commandment in the least. We close for this week with the following testimony from Dr. Scott, comment on Genesis 2:3: {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 415.7}

“The sacred writer here both records the appointment of the Sabbath, and assigns the reason for it: ‘Because that in it the Lord rested from all his work.’ This is evidently *historical*, and not by *anticipation;* for the reason subsisted from the beginning, and was more cogent immediately that it could be at a distance of more than two thousand years, when the command was solemnly renewed from Mount Sinai, long after sin had marred the beauty of the great Creator’s work; and it concerns the whole human race, as much as the nation of Israel.... And the silence of Moses concerning the observation of the Sabbath by the patriarchs, so far from proving that they were not commanded to observe it, will not render it so much as probable that they did not actually keep it, to those who attentively consider how much darkness rests upon many similar subjects, in the Scriptural history of the Church. Yet some intimations are given in this book, which show that the patriarchs divided the time into *weeks*, and observed the seventh day.” E. J. W. {SITI September 20, 1883, p. 416.1}

(*To be Continued*.)