



PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

The Sabbath and Nature

by Jim Buller

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8-11.

Most of our yearly holidays, (holy-days), commemorate a historical event. We celebrate them by doing things that both remind us of what happened on the event, and in a way, allow us to participate in the event. For example: to celebrate Thanksgiving, we share a meal; and for Christmas, we singing carols, set up nativity scenes, and give gifts.

In a similar way, the Sabbath is a weekly holiday. According to the commandment, on the Sabbath we are to celebrate creation and our Creator. But what do we actually *do* on Sabbath that celebrates the Creator and creation? Notice the following quotations, (which are given in their fuller context later in this paper):

“He set apart that special day for man to rest from his labor, that, as he should look upon the earth beneath and the heavens above, he might reflect that God made all these in six days and rested upon the seventh; and that, as he should behold the tangible proofs of God’s infinite wisdom, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.”

Testimonies for the Church Volume Two, page 582

“The Sabbath bids us behold in His created works the glory of the Creator. And it was because He desired us to do this that Jesus bound up His precious lessons with

the beauty of natural things. On the holy rest day, above all other days, we should study the messages that God has written for us in nature.”

Christ's Object Lessons pages 25

“We can walk out with them [our children] in the open air; we can sit with them in the groves and in the bright sunshine, and give their restless minds something to feed upon by conversing with them upon the works of God, and can inspire them with love and reverence by calling their attention to the beautiful objects in nature.”

Testimonies for the Church Volume Two, page 584

“In order to keep the Sabbath holy, it is not necessary that we enclose ourselves in walls, shut away from the beautiful scenes of nature and from the free, invigorating air of heaven.”

Testimonies for the Church Volume Two, page 583

“Those who sacrifice simplicity to fashion, and shut themselves away from the beauties of nature, cannot be spiritually minded.”

Testimonies for the Church Volume Two, page 584

Did you catch that last phrase, “Those who ... shut themselves away from the beauties of nature, *cannot be spiritually minded*.” Notice that it didn’t say it would be *hard* for them to be spiritually minded, or that they would have *difficulty* being spiritually minded. It said they “*cannot* be spiritually minded.” In other words, it is not *possible* to be a spiritual person if we do not connect with nature.

Satan knows this too. He knows that if he can keep us away from nature, he’s got us. Let’s put this together with the quote above that implies that we should not “enclose ourselves in walls” on the Sabbath—even if we use church walls to shut ourselves away from nature, Satan still has us. Don’t misunderstand me. I’m not saying we shouldn’t go to church on the Sabbath. What I see here is just that we shouldn’t spend *all day* at church, or all day within walls doing even “church” type activities on Sabbath, (special occasions being a possible exception). “*On the holy rest day, above all other days, we should study the messages that God has written for us in nature.*” The Sabbath is prime time for getting out into nature. Let’s not miss the full Sabbath blessing God has for us, and especially for our children.

Let me express all this another way. I suspect that the real reason most of us don’t spend much time in nature is, because it just isn’t all that interesting to us. Satan has manipulated our culture to minimize our contact with nature and tell us that getting into nature isn’t “cool.” But think for a moment. When God created Adam and Eve, where did He put them?—in the garden. And in the New Earth, after the “restoration of all things,” where will we be?—back in the garden. So, how can we truly appreciate Jesus dying for us, so that we might live, if we don’t appreciate the life He has for us *to live*—in the garden—in nature.

Please note that Adam and Eve weren’t just wandering around enjoying the beauty of nature, but otherwise being bored. They were *interacting* with everything in the garden. Not only were they taking care of the plants and animals, but they were

meeting their own needs from the things in the garden. They were also learning from the things of nature, as the garden was their school. “But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you.” Job 12:7-8

So, what does all this have to do with “Preparing to Stand in the Day of the Lord?” To put it very simply, let’s ask a few questions: By staying away from nature are we truly getting ready to go “home?” If we don’t find nature interesting now, isn’t it also likely that we won’t find heaven interesting either? Will we be motivated to “endure to the end,” if we think our reward will only be eternal boredom?

Invest in some books or videos on primitive skills and wild edible plants, (see the list in *Preparing to Stand*, #4 and #12). Learn how God can provide for all our needs directly from the things of nature. “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.” Psalm 145:15. As we interact with nature in this way we will learn to appreciate the natural world God created for us to live in. Let’s also be aware of the spiritual lessons connected with nature —it is, after all God’s “other book.” This summer, especially on Sabbath, let’s get out into nature more.

How Shall We Keep the Sabbath?

by Ellen White

Testimonies for the Church Volume Two, page 582-585

God is merciful. His requirements are reasonable, in accordance with the goodness and benevolence of His character. The object of the Sabbath was that all mankind might be benefited. Man was not made to fit the Sabbath; for the Sabbath was made after the creation of man, to meet his necessities. After God had made the world in six days, He rested and sanctified and blessed the day upon which He rested from all His work which He had created and made. He set apart that special day for man to rest from his labor, that, as he should look upon the earth beneath and the heavens above, he might reflect that God made all these in six days and rested upon the seventh; and that, as he should behold the tangible proofs of God's infinite wisdom, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.

In order to keep the Sabbath holy, it is not necessary that we enclose ourselves in walls, shut away from the beautiful scenes of nature and from the free, invigorating air of heaven. We should in no case allow burdens and business transactions to divert our minds upon the Sabbath of the Lord, which He has sanctified. We should not allow our minds to dwell upon things of a worldly character even. But the mind cannot be refreshed, enlivened, and elevated by being confined nearly all the Sabbath hours within walls, listening to long sermons and tedious, formal prayers. The Sabbath of the Lord is put to a wrong use if thus celebrated. The object for which it was instituted is not attained. The Sabbath was made for man, to be a blessing to him by calling his mind

from secular labor to contemplate the goodness and glory of God. It is necessary that the people of God assemble to talk of Him, to interchange thoughts and ideas in regard to the truths contained in His word, and to devote a portion of time to appropriate prayer. But these seasons, even upon the Sabbath, should not be made tedious by their length and lack of interest.

During a portion of the day, all should have an opportunity to be out of doors. How can children receive a more correct knowledge of God, and their minds be better impressed, than in spending a portion of their time out of doors, not in play, but in company with their parents? Let their young minds be associated with God in the beautiful scenery of nature, let their attention be called to the tokens of His love to man in His created works, and they will be attracted and interested. They will not be in danger of associating the character of God with everything that is stern and severe; but as they view the beautiful things which He has created for the happiness of man, they will be led to regard Him as a tender, loving Father. They will see that His prohibitions and injunctions are not made merely to show His power and authority, but that He has the happiness of His children in view. As the character of God puts on the aspect of love, benevolence, beauty, and attraction, they are drawn to love Him. You can direct their minds to the lovely birds making the air musical with their happy songs, to the spires of grass, and the gloriously tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air. All these proclaim the love and skill of the heavenly Artist, and show forth the glory of God.

Parents, why not make use of the precious lessons which God has given us in the book of nature, to give our children a correct idea of His character? Those who sacrifice simplicity to fashion, and shut themselves away from the beauties of nature, cannot be spiritually minded. They cannot understand the skill and power of God as revealed in His created works; therefore their hearts do not quicken and throb with new love and interest, and they are not filled with awe and reverence as they see God in nature.

All who love God should do what they can to make the Sabbath a delight, holy and honorable. They cannot do this by seeking their own pleasure in sinful, forbidden amusements. Yet they can do much to exalt the Sabbath in their families and make it the most interesting day of the week. We should devote time to interesting our children. A change will have a happy influence upon them. We can walk out with them in the open air; we can sit with them in the groves and in the bright sunshine, and give their restless minds something to feed upon by conversing with them upon the works of God, and can inspire them with love and reverence by calling their attention to the beautiful objects in nature.

The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than by devising means to impart proper instruction to their families and interesting them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God and what He requires of us in order to perfect Christian characters and attain to eternal life. Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children may look forward to it and have a welcome in their hearts for it.

Testimonies for the Church Volume Two, pages 701-705

... Everything that can possibly be done on the six days which God has given to you, should be done. You should not rob God of one hour of holy time. Great blessings are promised to those who place a high estimate upon the Sabbath and realize the obligations resting upon them in regard to its observance. ...

When the Sabbath commences, we should place a guard upon ourselves, upon our acts and our words, lest we rob God by appropriating to our own use that time which is strictly the Lord's. We should not do ourselves, nor suffer our children to do, any manner of our own work for a livelihood, or anything which could have been done on the six working days. Friday is the day of preparation. Time can then be devoted to making the necessary preparation for the Sabbath and to thinking and conversing about it. Nothing which will in the sight of Heaven be regarded as a violation of the holy Sabbath should be left unsaid or undone, to be said or done upon the Sabbath. God requires not only that we refrain from physical labor upon the Sabbath, but that the mind be disciplined to dwell upon sacred themes. The fourth commandment is virtually transgressed by conversing upon worldly things or by engaging in light and trifling conversation. Talking upon anything or everything which may come into the mind is speaking our own words. Every deviation from right brings us into bondage and condemnation. ...

Those who are not fully converted to the truth frequently let their minds run freely upon worldly business, and, although they may rest from physical toil upon the Sabbath, their tongues speak out what is in their minds. ... All this is Sabbath breaking. If the mind is running upon worldly matters, the tongue will reveal it, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. ...

None should feel at liberty to spend sanctified time in an unprofitable manner. It is displeasing to God for Sabbathkeepers to sleep during much of the Sabbath. They dishonor their Creator in so doing, and, by their example, say that the six days are too precious for them to spend in resting. They must make money, although it be by robbing themselves of needed sleep, which they make up by sleeping away holy time. They then excuse themselves by saying: "The Sabbath was given for a day of rest. I will not deprive myself of rest to attend meeting, for I need rest." Such make a wrong use of the sanctified day. They should, upon that day especially, interest their families in its observance and assemble at the house of prayer with the few or with the many, as the case may be. They should devote their time and energies to spiritual exercises, that the divine influence resting upon the Sabbath may attend them through the week. Of all the days in the week, none are so favorable for devotional thoughts and feelings as the Sabbath.

All heaven was represented to me as beholding and watching upon the Sabbath those who acknowledge the claims of the fourth commandment and are observing the Sabbath. Angels were marking their interest in, and high regard for, this divine institution. Those who sanctified the Lord God in their hearts by a strictly devotional frame of mind, and who sought to improve the sacred hours in keeping the Sabbath to the best of their ability, and to honor God by calling the Sabbath a delight--these the

angels were specially blessing with light and health, and special strength was given them. But, on the other hand, the angels were turning from those who failed to appreciate the sacredness of God's sanctified day, and were removing from them their light and their strength. I saw them overshadowed with a cloud, desponding, and frequently sad. They felt a lack of the Spirit of God.

Christ's Object Lessons pages 24-26

So through the creation we are to become acquainted with the Creator. The book of nature is a great lesson book, which in connection with the Scriptures we are to use in teaching others of His character, and guiding lost sheep back to the fold of God. As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind. It is not the conviction that logical reasoning produces; but unless the mind has become too dark to know God, the eye too dim to see Him, the ear too dull to hear His voice, a deeper meaning is grasped, and the sublime, spiritual truths of the written word are impressed on the heart.

In these lessons direct from nature, there is a simplicity and purity that makes them of the highest value. All need the teaching to be derived from this source. In itself the beauty of nature leads the soul away from sin and worldly attractions, and toward purity, peace, and God. Too often the minds of students are occupied with men's theories and speculations, falsely called science and philosophy. They need to be brought into close contact with nature. Let them learn that creation and Christianity have one God. Let them be taught to see the harmony of the natural with the spiritual. Let everything which their eyes see or their hands handle be made a lesson in character building. Thus the mental powers will be strengthened, the character developed, the whole life ennobled.

Christ's purpose in parable teaching was in direct line with the purpose of the Sabbath. God gave to men the memorial of His creative power, that they might discern Him in the works of His hand. The Sabbath bids us behold in His created works the glory of the Creator. And it was because He desired us to do this that Jesus bound up His precious lessons with the beauty of natural things. On the holy rest day, above all other days, we should study the messages that God has written for us in nature. We should study the Saviour's parables where He spoke them, in the fields and groves, under the open sky, among the grass and flowers. As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love.