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## **"LEARN WHAT THIS MEANETH."**

**"Go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice." – Matt. 9:13 – R.V.**

This injunction is just as pertinent now as it was when Jesus gave it, yet we cannot but think, according to our experience and observation, that if he were to make the same remark now to those who, "after the most straitest sect" of their religion, live Pharisees, it would be met by some such words as the following: "Why, Lord, do you ask us to learn the meaning of those old sayings of the prophets? They are expressed in language that is highly figurative and are so full of symbols [R539 : page 3] and metaphors that it is impossible for us to understand them; indeed we think we ought not to pry into such things."

But this was an important lesson, and Jesus wished to call their attention to it. His friendship with publicans and sinners seemed to them to be out of order and so they were questioning the disciples, doubtfully, regarding it, and this called forth the statement of Jesus quoted above.

It is doubtful if they ever learned that God's work in Christ was not to sacrifice the world, but to save it, for, says Jesus, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." (Luke 9:56). When Christ Jesus speaks we may see at the time but one phase of what is meant, while he causes the word spoken to span the everlasting relations of the subject.

When Jesus, in Matt. 12:7, referred to these same words of the prophet (Hosea 6:6), he did so in connection with the question of the observance of the Sabbath, saying, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." This was equivalent to saying that they did

not know its meaning. Then, rather peculiarly comes in the words, "For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."

In both these cases it was the lovingkindness of Jesus that disturbed their pharisaical natures and called forth their opposition. It is the mercy of God in Christ toward the world that distressed the Pharisees of Jesus' time, and distresses the same generation now; for "this generation" of vipers (this kind or class) has not yet passed away and will not have passed away until all the prophecy of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is fulfilled. (Matt. 24:34).

Those who are not in spirit with Christ Jesus have ever been opposed to having mercy shown to the world in a limited way and time, professing to believe that Christ came to save the world, but yet that only a small proportion of them will be saved in any sense; that Jesus came to save men from the calamity which befel the race in Adam, but will only half, or not half, succeed.

They think that when men die in Adam they pass a line beyond which mercy and the power of Christ to save, cannot go, thus limiting the wisdom and the power of God, "who will have all men to be saved and come to the KNOWLEDGE of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:4).

It is "a thing incredible" with them that God should raise the dead, though they profess to believe in a "resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust," but still if one talks about the real resurrection of all men to actual life and hope again, "this generation," like their fathers who so beset Jesus, cry out in disgust, and act as though they thought of us as they did of Paul when he spoke of being sent "far hence unto the Gentiles," "away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." (Acts 22:22.)

How strange it seems to us, that the love of God so strikingly manifest in the gift of his Son, should be so buried up under papal rubbish as to make it seem to have no existence.

That the restitution of all things, spoken of by the mouth of all the holy prophets," should be entirely dropped out of the teaching of the nominal church, and the destruction of most things substituted, shows the need of their "learning what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice: for the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." But it also shows, as Jesus said, that these things are hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. In the Sabbath just now approaching, that mercy will shine forth in "the exceeding riches of his grace." But many do not wish to "learn what this meaneth." How full of meaning were Jesus' words!

J. C. S.

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