

[R4599 : page 133]

## "I WILL HAVE MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE"

– MATTHEW 12:1-14. – MAY 1. –

SABBATH observance is the essence of this study. Reasonable people, regardless of their religious convictions, are ready to admit the wisdom, the expediency, yes, the necessity, for a Sabbath day, a rest day once a week. Whatever disputes there are on the subject, therefore, pertain to which day shall be observed and to the manner of the observance. When, through Moses as Mediator, God adopted the nation of Israel as his peculiar people, accepting them into Covenant relationship through their promised obedience to the Law, he fixed for them a special day of the week, the seventh, to be their Sabbath, or day of rest. This Law specially appertained to Palestine. Had it extended beyond, to encompass the whole earth, it would have been necessary for the Law to specify which day should be considered the Sabbath on the other side of the earth, where the time would, of course, be twenty-four hours different.

But those of us who are not Jews by nature and not under that Law Covenant are not bound by its limitation that the Sabbath should be on the seventh day of the week. Indeed, neither Jesus nor the Apostles ever placed [R4599 : page 134] the Gospel Church under the Law Covenant at all. They tell us that those under it were the "house of servants" in bondage and that we are the "house of sons," if we "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

This does not mean liberty or freedom to do wrong. But since Christians are not limited to the land of Palestine, it leaves us free to follow the spirit of the Law rather than its letter. This is true of the entire Ten Commandments, as well as of the Fourth. The Heavenly Father does not address his spirit-begotten children with

commandments not to kill, not to steal, etc., because such commandments to them would be unnecessary. Begotten of the holy Spirit, they love God and reverence him alone, and would not think of homaging images, nor of profaning the Holy Name, nor of doing injury to a neighbor or a brother. On the contrary, their love for God would lead them to honor his Name, to serve his Cause. **[R4600 : page 134]** And their love for their neighbor as for themselves would prompt them to render him service – "doing good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10.) This love, the Apostle assures us, is the fulfillment of the Law, so far as we are concerned – the fulfilling of the spirit of the Law – for "ye are not under the Law (Covenant), but under [the] Grace (Covenant)." – Rom. 6:14; Gal. 3:29.

The Jews had a system of Sabbath Days and Sabbath Years – the Seventh Day and the  $(7 \times 7 + 1 = 50)$  Fiftieth Day, or Day of Pentecost. And they had a system of year Sabbaths, the Seventh Year and the  $(7 \times 7 + 1 = 50)$  Fiftieth Year, or Year of Jubilee. These were typical, as the Apostle explains, and true Christians may enjoy the antitypes. Thus to us the Seventh Day represents a Rest of a higher character than that of the Law – a rest of faith, as instead of a physical rest. "We who believe do enter into his rest" – a faith rest based upon our acceptance of Jesus as our satisfaction before God. The fulness of this rest we attain when we receive the begetting of the holy Spirit. And this was typified by the sending of the holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Similarly Israel's Sabbatic Year of Jubilee has its antitype in the great Millennial Age of Rest. (Acts 3:20.) But we leave the discussion of this for a more convenient season.

The Great Teacher as a Jew was as much under the obligations of every feature of the Law Covenant as any other Jew. We may be sure that he did not violate any feature of it. He was obligated to keep the letter of it in a sense and degree which he

has not commanded us, his followers. It is ours merely to keep the spirit of it. Hence if we were living in Palestine neither the Seventh Day nor any other particular day of the week would be obligatory upon us. But it would be our pleasure to maintain the spirit of the Jewish Law. Acting along the lines of this liberty, the early Church began to meet on the First Day of the week, because it was on that day that their Redeemer arose from the dead. On that day he appeared to some in the upper room and to two on the way to Emmaus and to Mary, and subsequently to others of the disciples near the tomb. These four manifestations of the Lord's resurrection marked that day in a special sense as a holy day to the early Church. They waited during an entire week and then again he appeared on the first day of the week. Indeed, so far as we may know, all of his eight appearances to his followers after his resurrection were on the first day of the week. No wonder, then, it became known to them as the Lord's Day. No wonder if they specially associated with that Day all the blessings of God and a rest of faith which came to them through the Redeemer. Quite probably those who lived in Jewish communities would continue to observe the Seventh Day also, because its general observance would make this a necessity. But the First Day of the week became the general time for the Lord's followers to assemble themselves and to partake of a simple meal called breaking of bread (not the Lord's Supper) in commemoration of the fact that on the day of his resurrection Jesus manifested himself to his followers in the breaking of bread.

### **THE LAW MADE VOID BY TRADITIONS**

But we are not to understand from the present study that the Master reproved the Jews for keeping the Seventh Day, which was their duty. His reproofs attach to certain extremes. The Pharisees exaggerated some features and entirely overestimated other features of the Law. In their theory there was no harm in eating the corn on the Sabbath Day, but to pull an ear of it they construed

to be reaping. And to rub it out of the chaff they considered to be threshing and winnowing. Similarly, to scratch or look for a flea was estimated to be hunting, and thus God's reasonable Law was made to appear absurd. It was such absurdities only that Jesus combated. He showed that one had a right to satisfy his hunger, and cited a case where the Prophet David had done so without blame. He cited also the fact that the priests labored on the Sabbath Day without blame. He explained that God was desirous of seeing in his creatures the quality of mercy towards one another, rather than merely the sacrificing of their comforts. Had they recognized this Truth they would not have found fault with the Apostles.

Then, as though to demonstrate his position, he healed a man with a withered hand, also demonstrating by his miracle that he had the Divine favor and that his teaching on the subject had this evidence of its truthfulness. He pointed out the inconsistency of his critics, saying that since they would relieve one of their brute beasts, if he fell into a pit on the Sabbath they would see, therefore, how illogical was their position in objecting to his performing cures of human ills on the Sabbath Day. But the evil heart is not amenable to reason. The very fact that he demonstrated his teachings to be superior to theirs excited the Pharisees to envy, malice, hatred, and the very spirit of murder. Thus they evidenced that they lacked the quality of mercy, love, which God would specially approve, and without which we cannot be his children. Sacrifice is right in its place, but mercy more particularly indicates the acceptable condition of the heart. Quite probably Jesus did so many of his miracles on the Sabbath Day as a type – as a prophetic picture of the great fact that the antitypical day, the great Sabbath Day, will be the Seventh Thousand Year period, the Millennium.

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[R4604 : page 134]

## BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Four pounds of love we send to thee today,  
And only four,  
For Uncle Samuel's mail bags, they say,  
Can take no more.  
But mail bags, boxes, sacks of ev'ry kind  
Are all too small,  
And only hearts are large enough  
To hold it all.  
So take our love on the installment plan,  
Dear friend of mine –  
We send a part today, more when we can.  
We trust for thine!

CLASS AT NASSAU, N.H.

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