

## WHICH DAY IS SABBATH?

– MARK 2:23-3:6. – APRIL 14. –

**Text: – "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." – Mark 2:27.**

THAT THE BIBLE teaches some important lessons respecting the Sabbath is undisputed, but what that lesson is is much questioned. The fourth commandment of the Decalogue refers to the seventh day and requires its observance as a day of rest, and no more. The Ten Commandments, as a whole, were the basis of the Law Covenant, compulsory upon every Jew. The Jew keeping all of those commandments was promised everlasting life. Failure to keep them all condemned him afresh. There can be no doubt on this point.

However, in our Lord's time, Jewish religionists had become to a considerable degree formalists, and greater stress was laid upon the literal commandments than on their real spirit, their real meaning. Jesus reproved this on several occasions, saying to the Doctors of the Law, "You bind heavy burdens upon the people." For instance, to hunt for a flea on the Sabbath was construed to be a violation of the fourth commandment, a breaking of the Sabbath, for it was claimed that the man was hunting as truly as though it were a buffalo or a lion.

Similarly, as mentioned in this lesson, fault was found with our Lord's disciples because, passing through a wheat field, they rubbed out some of the grains in their hands and ate them. This was construed as a violation of the Sabbath because it was threshing, winnowing, whether the amount was small or great. Jesus did not violate the Sabbath ordinance nor teach men so. He was a Jew and bound to keep the Sabbath law to the full. He did object to such nonsensical misinterpretations as we have mentioned. In this study He shows that the Sabbath was ordained for man, and that it is a mistake to suppose, as some then and some now seem to suppose, that God made [R4996

**: page 100]** man simply to keep the Sabbath. One day of rest to six of work was intended for man's comfort and protection, and at the same time to symbolize a certain great lesson, which we shall note hereafter.

Jesus, knowing the mental attitude of His hearers in respect to ancient customs, supported His teaching by citing them to what David did – that in an emergency he ate some of the show bread, unlawful except for the priests, and that doing so he was not punished, not considered blameworthy. Jesus, as the Son of Man, was Lord of the Sabbath, and had a right to explain its true import.

Later Jesus went into the synagogue where there was a man who had a withered hand and they watched Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse Him. Addressing them, Jesus said, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" They made no answer. The Savior was grieved and angry with a righteous indignation that men should so seriously mistake and misrepresent the Divine arrangement as to think it sinful to relieve human distress on the Sabbath. Then He said to the man, "Stretch forth thine hand!" It was healed. But the Pharisees, more zealous for their theory than for the truth, for the letter of the Law than for the spirit of the Law, were angry and took counsel with the Herodians how Jesus might be destroyed – be killed.

## **LORD OF THE SABBATH**

No commandment was given by Jesus or the Apostles to the Church respecting the Sabbath day. The early Church evidently did observe the Jewish seventh day in many places, and in some places the first day of the week, the anniversary of the Lord's resurrection; and sometimes **[R4996 : page 101]** they observed both of these days. But their observance was not that of law or command, for the Apostle wrote, "Ye are not under law, but under grace." They had the *privilege* of keeping either or both of those days holy, sacred to the Lord, resting from earthly affairs and giving themselves peculiarly to spiritual matters.

So with us today. We are glad that one day in the week is so generally observed as a day of rest or Sabbath (Sabbath day signifies *rest day*). We are glad that the day so generally set apart is the first day of the week, because it so beautifully commemorates the Christian's hope, attested by our Lord's resurrection from the dead on that day. And if God's people had two Sabbaths, or seven of them in the week, we believe they would have that much more of blessing.

Indeed, to the Christian, every day is Sabbath, every day should be used as holy to the Lord, and nothing should at any time be done contrary to the Divine will or the principles of the Divine Government. Jesus' declaration that He was Lord of the Sabbath reminds us afresh of St. Paul's declaration that God the Father rested from His own work on the Seventh Day; He left the work entirely for Jesus to do. The Seventh Day of Jehovah's rest was one of the great Days of the Creative Week, each seven thousand years long. Six of these great days had passed and man's creation was in the end of the sixth.

Having established His human son in Eden as the god or ruler of the earth, Jehovah rested or ceased from His work during the Seventh Day or seventh period of seven thousand years. Six thousand years of this seventh period have already passed and Jehovah God has rested, ceased from His work – He has not interfered to assist man or lift him out of sin and degradation. Another thousand years of the seven remains, but God will not personally engage in man's rescue even then. Why not? Because it is a part of the Divine Program to leave fallen man and his rescue entirely in the hands of Jesus. He is Lord of this Great Seventh Day.

### **MAN'S SEVENTH DAY**

This entire period of seven thousand years which constitutes the great Seventh Day or Sabbath, with God, is divided with *man* into seven great Days of a thousand years each, in six of which he has been under a reign of sin and death, toil and suffering; but the Seventh, or Sabbath of a thousand years, has been appointed for his rescue and

uplifting and blessing. In that glorious Seventh thousand-year period Jesus is to be Lord. It will be the great Antitypical Sabbath, and the great Antitypical Jubilee for mankind. The six days of toil will terminate in the great Sabbath of Messiah's glorious reign and the blessing of all the families of the earth.

## THE CHURCH'S SABBATH DAY

St. Paul clearly intimates that to the Church, the New Creation, every day is a Sabbath day, in the sense that God's consecrated people rest as God rests, in faith, in hope, in trust that Jesus will eventually deliver the groaning creation and bring them into a glorious Sabbath, Rest. St. Paul says, "We who believe do enter into rest." Literally, we who believe have a perpetual Sabbath. Seven days in the week, and fifty-two weeks in the year our hearts rest in the Lord and take comfort in the glorious promises of His Word through faith. Thus we rest from feelings of responsibility and worry on account of the world's salvation in exactly the same way that the heavenly Father rests.

We, like the heavenly Father, have the fullest confidence that the Redeemer will yet accomplish the blessing of all the families of the earth, and bring all the willing and obedient into the great Rest Time of the future – the thousand years of the Messianic Kingdom, in which the world will be released from the slavery of Satan, sin and death – in which the groaning creation "will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God" – so many as are willing and obedient.

But while the Church is thus resting by faith and now enjoy a Sabbath, even though, according to the flesh, we are passing through tribulation hoping to attain a share in Messiah's Kingdom, the Apostle points out that "There *remaineth* a rest for the people of God" – still a different one from that which we now enjoy. The actual rest or Sabbath will be not merely that of faith and rest of heart, it will include also a rest from all labor, while our works will follow with us. In other words, the resurrection change will bring us full relief from the trials, the toils

of the way, and usher us fully into the glorious blessings of the resurrection state.

