

LAWFUL ON THE SABBATH

– *MARCH 15.* – *LUKE 13:10-17; 14:1-6.* –

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

MUCH confusion prevails amongst Christian people respecting the Sabbath day. One fruitful source of this confusion is that few realize that God's arrangements with the followers of Jesus are totally different from those which He made with Natural Israel under the Law Covenant. Everything under that Covenant was a type and contained a valuable lesson for Christians, but to mistake the type for the antitype is to confuse our minds and to miss the beauty and force of the antitype.

There was no Sabbath day before the Jewish Law, except in the sense that the word Sabbath signifies rest, and that we are informed that God rested on the seventh great Day, or Epoch, of the Creative Week. Enoch, who walked with God; Abraham, the friend of God, and others pleasing to the Lord, knew nothing about the Sabbath, even as they knew nothing about the Atonement Day and its sacrifices, or other matters appertaining to Israel's Law Covenant.

The Apostle Paul explains that the Israelites were a House of Servants, under Moses; but that the Church is a House of Sons, under Christ. (Hebrews 3:1-6.) God's method of dealing with the House of Servants would very properly be different from His method of dealing with the House of Sons. Commands are given to the servants without explanation why or wherefore. But the Apostle explains that God deals with us as with sons. To the true Christian the Heavenly Father makes known His plans, His purposes, His arrangements, in order that His sons, who have His Spirit, may sympathetically enter into those plans, by obedience to

the extent of self-sacrifice, not because of command, but because of joy to do the Father's will.

Jesus and the Apostles were Jews, and were under obligation to the Law Covenant up to the time that Jesus by His death became the "end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Since that time the followers of Jesus are in no sense of the word bound by the Jewish Law. They are interested in the Ten Commandments, because those commandments in an outward way indicate the will of God; and all the sons of God are anxious to know the Father's will, that they may voluntarily do it. But God does not address the House of Sons, "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal"; for so surely as they have been begotten of the Holy Spirit at all, they will not wish to kill, nor wish to steal.

In dealing with the House of Sons God, through the Head of the House, has set up a new law, which is all-comprehensive and means much more than the Law of Moses was previously understood to signify. It is the Law of Love. As the Apostle declares, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." The Law is comprehended in the one word Love – love supreme for God, and love for our fellow men. Finally, Jesus declared, "A new command I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." This He said to us who are laying down our lives one for the other.

SEVENTH DAY – FIRST DAY

Early in the Gospel Dispensation the followers of Jesus began to meet on the first day of the week. Apparently the custom had its start in the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on that day, and appeared several times on that day to His followers; and on the following first day of the week He appeared again. It became a custom amongst the disciples to have their fellowship on that day, not that it was commanded of the Lord, but because of their desire to remember the Master and to have fellowship with each other. Quite probably they kept the Sabbath day and the first day as well,

for a time. They evidently had difficulty in realizing how completely they had passed from the domination of Moses and his Law to be under the headship of Jesus and His guidance – "the liberty wherewith Christ makes free" indeed.

Although Christians have now abandoned the observance of the seventh day in favor of the first day of the week, many erroneously think that God authorized the change. But not so; the Christian is not under law, but under grace. It was from privilege that the early disciples met together on the first day, and not by instruction of God. So it should be still, and so it is yet with some. True Christians cannot have too much opportunity for fellowship together for the study of the Heavenly Father's Word, and for offering Him the worship and homage of their hearts.

True Christians undoubtedly are glad that there is a special day of the week set apart, in which they can more particularly give themselves to prayer, worship, praise and Bible study, and good works – even though the enforcement of such a Sunday be by human law and through a misconception. Glad would many of the Lord's people be if their earthly affairs were so arranged as to permit of two Sundays in each week, or more. But in order to enjoy Sunday properly, the Lord's consecrated people should be freed from the misconceptions which so generally prevail.

THE SABBATH OF REST

Israel's Law provided two Sabbaths. One, every seventh year, found its multiple and fulfilment in the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee and of full release. The other was every seventh day, and found its fulfilment through its multiple, in the fiftieth day – the day of Pentecost – the day which foreshadowed the rest into which the people of God may enter even now.

The Apostle refers to both of these in Hebrews 4:1-11. The Sabbath day has its fulfilment in the rest and peace of heart enjoyed

by the antitypical Israelites. It is a perpetual Sabbath with them. They enter into rest. [R5405 : page 57] They have reached that place where they have the peace of God ruling in their hearts. They rest from their own works – from all hope that they could commend themselves to God by works of any kind, Sabbath keeping or otherwise. They enter into rest because they see that God has provided in Jesus the help necessary for all, that they are "complete in Him." This rest or peace no man taketh from them. It is theirs so long as they abide by faith in Christ, in God.

But, as the Apostle points out, "there remaineth a rest for the people of God" – a future rest. The Church will enter into that rest when they experience their resurrection change, when they are made like the Savior and enter into the joys of their Lord. That will be the complete rest. So far as the world is concerned, the great Messiah's Reign of a thousand years will be the Sabbath of the world in general, in which they will have the privilege of attaining perfection in every sense of the word and thus will enter into rest by coming into harmony with God.

Jesus did many of His miracles on the Sabbath days, partly no doubt to emphasize the fact that the great Sabbath, the thousand-year Day, the seventh thousand-year Day of earth's history, will be the time of His Kingdom, in which all mankind will be privileged to be healed from sin and sickness, sorrow and pain, and to be brought to the full perfection of human nature, to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary.

TO DO GOOD ON THE SABBATH

Since Jesus according to the flesh was a Jew, and therefore bound by all the commandments of the Jewish Law, it follows that He could do nothing contrary to that Law. He could not set it aside, nor was it proper that he should explain to the Jews the real meaning of the Sabbath. All that would come later, under the Holy Spirit's instruction, after Pentecost, after the begetting of the Spirit;

for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." But Jesus could, and did, correct certain of the misapprehensions of the Law which had crept in through the teachings of their rabbis, the Doctors of the Law, and the Pharisees.

These for show exaggerated the letter of the Law in some respects, while they entirely ignored its spirit. Thus when the disciples of Jesus, passing through a wheat field, rubbed some of the grains in their hands to hull them before eating, the Pharisees complained that they were breaking the Sabbath – they were threshing and winnowing. Jesus showed that this was not the purport of the Law. It was not made to hinder any good or necessary work, but to benefit the people. According to the Doctors of the Law, to search for a biting flea would be sin [R5406 : page 57] on the Sabbath day, because it would be "hunting." Thus in various ways they made the reasonable Law of God to appear unreasonable to the people; and while thus particular in trifles, they ignored the weightier matters of the Law, which appertained to justice, love and mercy.

In the lesson before us we have two instances of healing on the Sabbath. A woman had an infirmity which had bowed her down for eighteen years. Jesus released her from her bondage on a Sabbath day. He laid His hands upon her and said, "Thou art loosed from thine infirmity"; and she was made straight and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue was indignant and said unto the people, There are six days in which you can come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.

This was intended as a special rebuke to Jesus, intimating that He was not so holy and so careful of the Sabbath as He should be, but was a violator of the Law. But Jesus replied: "Ye hypocrites! doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to water? and ought not this

woman, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bondage on the Sabbath day?" And His adversaries were put to shame.

The other case was that of a man troubled with dropsy. Jesus, knowing their attitude of mind, discussed the subject in advance on this occasion, asking the Doctors of the Law and the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day or not?" They made no answer. Then He took the sick man and healed him, and inquired of the critics, "Which of you having an ass or an ox fall into a pit would not straightway draw him out on a Sabbath day?" But they could not answer.

A proper understanding of the Sabbath, the rest which God has provided for His people, is a great blessing. "We who believe do enter into rest" – an abiding rest, a perpetual Sabbath. And all such are glad to have special opportunities, as these may present themselves, for gathering together in the name of the Lord, for worship, praise, study and fellowship. Without regard to which day, the Apostle suggests to us, Let us forsake not the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; and so much the more, as we see the Day drawing on – the glorious Day of Messiah's Kingdom approaching, and the shadows of night and darkness, of ignorance and superstition passing away. – Heb. 10:25.

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