

JESUS' TEACHINGS CONCERNING THE SABBATH AND OTHER QUESTIONS

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 12:1-50

LESSON 42 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 12:1-50

¹ At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

² But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

³ But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

⁴ How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

⁵ Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

⁶ But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple.

⁷ But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

⁸ For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

⁹ And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

¹⁰ And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

¹¹ And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you,

NOTES:

The Most Important

"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," was the point that Jesus often tried to make clear to the Pharisees. They prided themselves upon the ceremonies they went through in connection with their religious worship. The sacrifices they made in the Temple, killing many animals as commanded by the Law given to Moses, were more important to them than taking care of the poor, showing love to the needy, and trying to help sinners get saved.

God had commanded that the sacrifices and offerings be made, because "without shedding of blood is no remission" for sins (See **Hebrews 9.19-22** ¹⁹ For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, ²⁰ Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. ²¹ Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. ²² And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.). They were a type of Jesus Who was to come and shed His Blood that men might be saved. But these Pharisees went through the motions of worship to God while their hearts were full of sin.

Jesus was not preaching a new doctrine. The Prophet Isaiah spoke hundreds of years before of God's disdain for people who worshiped Him in that manner. When the people were obeying God, He enjoyed the smell of the sweet savour that came from the altar where the offerings were burned when the people sinned, God said, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? ... I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. ... Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them" (Isaiah 1: 11-14).

This was the same God Who had spoken in love to the Children of Israel: "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Exodus 6:7); and again, "The LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). God loved His people, and He wanted them to love Him. Whenever they served Him with all their hearts, and loved Him more than anything in the world, He poured out great blessings upon them; but when they honoured Him with their lips and their hearts were removed far from Him, He sent trouble upon them. We cannot expect to have the blessing of God upon us if we are trying to cover up sin in our live. Jesus sees the sin, calls that person a sinner, and says, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20).

The scribes and Pharisees studied the Scriptures diligently, and could read all about the judgments, which God had sent upon people when they sinned; but they did not take warning to themselves. They continued to cover up their sins. Jesus rebuked

that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out?

¹² How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

¹³ Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

¹⁴ Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

¹⁵ But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

¹⁶ And charged them that they should not make him known:

¹⁷ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

¹⁸ Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.

¹⁹ He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

²⁰ A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

²¹ And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

²² Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.

²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

them sharply, calling them "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones." Many times we hear His striking denunciations: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" He told them they paid tithes; they said long prayers; they offered sacrifices; but they had omitted the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." When Paul wrote to the Romans, he said, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). If the Pharisees had had the love of God in their hearts as they should have had, they could have kept the Law without half trying. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." If we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourself, we will not do anything that the Law commands us not to do.

Jesus never spoke so harshly to sinners who did not pretend to serve Him. He came to save sinners; He was the sinners' Friend. The Jews criticized Him, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2); "Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matthew 11: 19). Among the sinners Jesus found people who wanted to be saved, people who were willing to confess and repent of their sins.

Honouring the Sabbath

We notice that many of the miracles of healing that Jesus performed were done on the Sabbath. It may not have been that He chose that day especially to do good; but the works He did on the Sabbath always caused contention, and are perhaps more frequently recorded for that reason. Jesus certainly showed love and mercy to the sick, the lame, the halt, the blind -- and love is the fulfilling of the Law. Jesus asked the hypocrites if they would not help a sheep out of a pit if it fell in on the Sabbath. Surely they would. But was not a man of more value than a sheep? Was it not more important that a lame man be healed? The way the Pharisees acted, one would have thought they considered a sheep worth much more than a crippled man. Can you see how far these people had drifted from the love God wanted them to have in their hearts?

Jesus and His disciples were walking through a cornfield one Sabbath day and they were hungry. The Law of Moses did not call it stealing if a man ate something in another man's field when he was hungry. But because Jesus and His disciples broke the corn from the stalk on the Sabbath, the Jews complained again that they were breaking the Law. Jesus must have become very tired of their continual faultfinding, but He did try to explain to them why He was justified in doing what He did. He said the priests killed animals -- which, was working -- on the Sabbath, but because it was done for the Temple worship they considered it all right. The Temple had been built to honour God, so surely the Son of God was greater than the Temple. Then if Jesus allowed His disciples to eat the corn in the field on the Sabbath, it was no sin.

While God, with the completion of the creation, rested on the seventh day and hallowed it, yet it was not given to the Israelites to observe this day until the Law was written, when the seventh day was established as a Sabbath in commemoration of their deliverance out of bondage (**Deuteronomy 5:15** ¹⁵ And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.). Jesus emphasised the necessity of Christians observing in spirit all the other laws given in the Ten Commandments but He never repeated the command to observe the Sabbath.

²⁵ And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

²⁶ And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

²⁷ And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

²⁸ But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

²⁹ Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

³⁰ He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

³¹ Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

³² And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

³³ Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

³⁴ O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

³⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

³⁶ But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak,

Christians observe the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. This was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 23:9-12 are found the instructions for the offering of "firstfruit"; and this offering, we note, was made "on the morrow after the sabbath" (verse 11). Paul, in his famous chapter on the resurrection, gives us the significance of this offering: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20). Jesus Christ, therefore, in His resurrection became the fulfilment of the offering of firstfruits. He arose from the dead on the morrow after the Sabbath, according to the time of that offering.

The "first day of the week" was the day on which Jesus arose; it was the day on which He made His several appearances to the disciples when they had met together. It was the day that the Holy Ghost came upon the people in the upper room, at which time Christ's church was founded. It was the day the early church observed from 100 A. D. to 324 A. D., according to the universal testimony of the fathers from Ignatius to Eusebius, which refutes the claims that Sunday was not observed until so established by the Catholic church many years after the founding of the Christian church.

What must we do to honour the Lord's Day? Jesus has not given us the commandments to refrain from lighting a fire or doing any cooking on Sunday; He has not told us that we can only walk a mile and a half, which was a Sabbath day's Journey under the old law. The Lord wants us to deny ourselves our own pleasures, and do His service (See **Isaiah 58:13, 14** ¹³ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words: ¹⁴ Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*). If we have to travel fifty miles to hold a Gospel service, Jesus approves of that, but we should not spend our Sundays on the highways on pleasure trips, nor do any more travelling than necessary. If we love the Lord we shall use that day for His service, and do only such temporal things as absolutely must be done. We must eat on Sunday to have strength to do the Lord's work, but we will not neglect His service in order to have big dinners or social gatherings. We will buy our groceries during the week and make as much preparation on Saturday as we can in order to keep our minds on Jesus on His day and worship Him.

We have mentioned before that when we love someone we want to do things for him. If we love Jesus, the most important thing in our lives is to do His will. That love in our hearts makes us love His day, and devote our strength to spreading the good news of salvation. Perhaps a person might receive big wages for working on Sunday, but does money compare with our love for God? Is not the salvation of a man of more value than a sheep?

Doing His Will

Who is it that Jesus claims for His own? "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). And notice what Paul the Apostle said about the blessings of the children of God: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). Can you imagine what a wonderful heritage we have to be called the children of God? But we must

they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

³⁷ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

³⁸ Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

³⁹ But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

⁴⁰ For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

⁴¹ The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here.

⁴² The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.

⁴³ When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

⁴⁴ Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished.

⁴⁵ Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

⁴⁶ While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his

have that love of God in our hearts to be His children. "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest" (Luke 6:35).

QUESTIONS

1. Which day of the week is the Christian Sabbath, and why do we keep it?
2. Name several ways in which one might dishonour the Sabbath.
3. How can we tell if a person is a Christian?
4. What relationship did Jesus claim to those who do His will?
5. What did Samuel tell Saul was more important than sacrifice

brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

⁴⁷ Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

⁴⁸ But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

⁴⁹ And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

⁵⁰ For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.