

Christ and the Sabbath

by C.I. Scofield

Jesus' actions on the Sabbath illustrate His lordship over the day and the difference between the Old and New Covenants.

Scripture: Matthew 12:6, Matthew 12:8, Romans 15:8, Colossians 2:16, Hebrews 4:3

Topics: "Sabbath Observance", "Lordship Of Christ"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches on the dispensational lesson found in Matthew 12:1-13, emphasizing the importance of understanding the time-notes in Scripture and the turning points in the life of Christ. Jesus challenges religious formalism and demonstrates His authority over the Sabbath, revealing that He is greater than the temple and Lord of the Sabbath. Despite knowing the consequences, Jesus courageously challenges Jewish notions and traditions, setting the stage for a new dispensation of grace and Christian activity on the first day of the week.

Transcript

(Matt, xii:1-13.)

I. The Analysis.

1. A Dispensational Lesson (verses 1-4).--Always observe the time-notes in Scripture. "In that day" is a phrase which holds the key to Old Testament Prophecy. The phrase "at that time" marks the turning points in the life of Christ. In Matt, xi:16-24 the rejected Christ turns Rejected. The cities where the mightiest works had been wrought had not repented. For them, henceforth, probation was ended. "The judgment" (xi:22-24) is now their one horizon. "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn." His disciples unquestionably violated the Sabbath (Numbers xv:32-36) and Jesus justified them by the example of David and his men in the time of his rejection by Israel. The Son of David took His right place typically as the unacknowledged King of Israel.

2. The One Greater than Temple and Ritual (verses 5-8). --See below.

3. How Formal Religion Hardens the Heart (verses 9-13).--All history, biblical and secular, bears witness that no influence known to man so hardens the heart as religious formalism. The inveterate hatred which Jesus encountered was the hatred of the most religious men of His time. It was the hatred of priests and scribes that hounded the Son of God to the cross. The crudest persecutions known to history have been

incited and carried through by formal religionists.

4. The Splendid Courage of Jesus (verses 1-13).--None knew so well as He that a blow struck at the current Jewish notion of the peculiar sanctity of the temple and the Sabbath would create a fatal and final breach with Judaism. None knew so well as He that beyond that Sabbath eating of corn, and healing in the synagogue, lay the cross--yet Jesus unhesitatingly struck the fatal blow.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

All that Jesus did on that eventful Sabbath day was but the illustration of His two great sayings: "In this place is one greater than the temple": "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." The Revision omits "even" and "day"--"The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." This is the true form, simpler, grander than that of the authorized version. Apparently the Protestant translators drew back from the more austere declaration. For Protestantism is Galatianized to the core, and has never escaped from a scarcely modified Judaism concerning the Sabbath. To this day it is legality's most sensitive spot. Great denominations will bear with the higher criticism more patiently than with the truth concerning the Sabbath.

First of all, it is remarkable that, even in His strictly Jewish ministry (Rom. xv:8; Matt, x:5, 6; xv:24), our Lord never repeated the seventh day commandment. Secondly, as Lord of the Sabbath, He cleared that Jewish institution from an unbiblical strictness; declaring that the Sabbath was made for man; i. e., to serve man, not to impose a yoke of bondage upon man--and teaching that it was "lawful" to do good on the Sabbath day. Thirdly, He knew that through the entire dispensation which would begin from Pentecost, Christians would observe a wholly different day, namely, the first and not the seventh day. Fourthly, He Himself set the pattern of first day observance by what He did and said on the first of the first days, that of His resurrection. It was not a day of enforced rest, but of holy activity. Rising from the dead He revealed Himself to the sorrowing Magdalene; sent a message of wonderful import to His disciples; held a secret interview with Peter; walked to Emmaus expounding the Scriptures; appeared to the assembled disciples, and imparted to them the Holy Spirit, The Sabbath belonged to the dispensation of law, was a day of enforced rest, and guarded by terrible legal sanctions. The first day belongs to the dispensation of grace, is a day of Christian activity, and finds its sanctions in the renewed hearts of Christ's redeemed ones.

No greater anomaly can well be imagined than that which is expressed in the phrase "Christian Sabbath." Its precise equivalent would be "legal grace." The Sabbath had its great and honored place in the national life of Israel; will again have its great place in the millennial earth; and is to the Christian a precious "shadow" (Col. ii:16, 17) of that rest of God (Heb. iv:3, 4) which he finds in Christ and His finished work.

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