

hence Jesus had no right to heal the man with the withered hand. Jesus falls back on pro-

phetic ideas about the Sabbath; it was a humane institution.

A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

The synagogue is something that we do not find in Old Testament times. This institution is supposed to have had its origin in the time of the Babylonian captivity when the Jewish exiles had no opportunity of maintaining the temple worship of God. In New Testament times, we find synagogues all over the land without interfering with the temple as the religious centre of the land. The synagogue served more purposes than that of a local church, for it was also public school and court of law. It was thus the real centre of the community life. Two things were required in the building of a synagogue. It must be built on an elevated place, and like the temple, it must face the east. Its shape was always that of a quadrilateral divided inside by three or five rows of pillars.

As regards the furniture of the synagogue, the most important item was the chest or cupboard (*teba*, the ark), in which the sacred rolls of the Law and the Prophets were kept. The synagogues of New Testament times were also doubtless provided with a raised platform (*bema*), on which stood the reading desk, from which the scriptures were read. The larger portion of the area was occupied by benches for the congregation, the worshipers facing southwards, in Galilee at least, towards the holy city. A few special seats in front of the *bema*, and facing the congregation, were occupied by the heads of the community. These are the chief seats in the synagogues coveted by the Pharisees. In front of the ark a lamp burned day and night.

THE LESSON APPLIED

By Rev. Professor J. M. Millar, D.D., Edmonton, Alberta

The Sabbath was a very important factor in the religious life of the Jewish people. It assumed a position of special influence after the Exile. Nehemiah insisted on the cessation of all labor within Jerusalem on that day. He even went so far as to declare that the calamity of the Exile was due to the Sabbath breaking of the Jews, Neh. 10:15-22. The institution continued to be cherished and guarded with the utmost care until the time of Jesus.

As an example of the scrupulous anxiety with which the Jews observed the Sabbath, it may be recalled that when they were being bitterly persecuted by the pagans by order of the King Antiochus Epiphanes, they refused to defend themselves in battle on the Sabbath day. They said, "Let us die in our innocence," and they were mown down by the brutal enemy. Pompey was later able to complete his mound against Jerusalem on the Sabbath unmolested. In the time of Jesus this tendency to slavish obedience was very pronounced. If a Levite broke the string of his musical instrument while playing in the temple,—but not elsewhere—he might tie it up, but he could not substitute a new string. A

stain might not have cold water poured on it, although it might be washed in the usual way. At this time, also, it was disputed whether one might eat an egg laid on the Sabbath day. This punctiliousness explains why many sick folk were brought to Jesus after sunset, that is, after the Sabbath was over. According to the Pharisees, the disciples violated the command about the Sabbath because "plucking" was a species of "reaping," while "rubbing" was a species of "threshing."

Observe now Jesus' attitude toward this huge structure of Sabbath regulations erected by the scribes. He rejected it as false. How did Jesus use the day? He worshiped in the synagogue; he walked with the disciples through the corn fields; he healed the sick. He made the day one of joy and gladness and service. He taught that each hour of the day was to be filled with service for one's fellows. He himself used the day in the way that would help others the best. That is what he meant when he said that the Son of man was lord even of the Sabbath.

So many people confuse Sunday with the old Jewish Sabbath, or are perplexed when they realize that we observe Sunday instead