



## LESSON VIII.—FEB. 21.

## Jesus and the Sabbath.

Matthew xii., 1-13.

## Golden Text.

It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days. Matthew xii., 12.

## Home Readings.

Monday, Feb. 15.—Matt. xii., 1-13.  
 Tuesday, Feb. 16.—Gen. ii., 1-3; Ex. xx. 8-11.  
 Wednesday, Feb. 17.—Num. xv., 27-36.  
 Thursday, Feb. 18.—Is. lvi., 1-8.  
 Friday, Feb. 19.—Is. lviii., 1-14.  
 Saturday, Feb. 20.—Neh. xiii., 15-22.  
 Sunday, Feb. 21.—Luke vi., 1-12.

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 hungry, 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, 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.

(By R. M. Kurtz.)

## INTRODUCTION.

The Sabbath problem is one of the most prominent of the day. It would be half solved if professing Christian people would cease to break it, if there were to be no travel on their part, save in the most emergent cases, if pleasure excursions, and the direct or indirect encouragement given to the profaning of the Sabbath were to cease.

As to what constitutes a proper observance of that day, each one in large measure must determine for himself. Perhaps you will say at once that such a rule as this would not amount to anything, for it would in effect be telling each one to do as he pleases with the day. But this is not correct. No live Christian man will wish, or ought to wish, that someone else fix his rules of conduct for him. He is given intelligence and conscience that he

may do this for himself, under the guidance of the Word of God as the Spirit leads him to understand it. Human advice is well, as it sheds light upon doubtful points, but the decision ought to rest in the person himself.

The scenes of this lesson are in and near Capernaum, toward the middle of his second year's ministry. You will notice that he is encountering opposition, and that he meets it with vigorous and searching replies.

Read the parallel passages Mark ii., 23-iii., 5, and Luke vi., 1-10. Also Luke xiii., 10-17.

## THE LESSON STUDY.

Verses 1, 2. '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.' The 'corn' here referred to was what we in the United States would call grain, that is, wheat or barley. The point of right and wrong, here was not one of taking what did not belong to them, but the doing of such a thing on the Sabbath. The law of Moses said, 'When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand,' etc. Deuteronomy xxiii., 25.

The Pharisees, with their hairsplitting distinctions over right and wrong conduct, and their blindness to the spirit of the law, immediately raised the question of the lawfulness of thus plucking and eating corn on the Sabbath.

3-8. 'For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.' Christ answers his accusers out of the Scriptures, citing three references to support his position. He first reminds them of the case of David taking the shewbread for himself and his men. I Samuel xxi., 1-6. The idea is that David, in a time of emergency, broke the letter of the law, though he kept its spirit. Also now, the disciples might be said to work in gathering corn and rubbing in their hands to separate the chaff from the grain, but it was not labor such as would constitute a breaking of the Sabbath.

Again, Christ called attention to the fact that the priests had to perform actual labor on the Sabbath, in the service of the temple. Here again was proof that the command to keep the Sabbath could not literally apply to all work absolutely.

If they had, again, understood the passage from Hosea vi., 6, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice' (Revised), they would not have condemned those that were guiltless. The Pharisees were slavishly literal in their understanding of Scripture, they could not see beyond the mere outward forms.

'For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.' Mark says, 'And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.' Christ is our Lord, and if the Sabbath was made for man, then he must be Lord of the Sabbath, rather than restricted in his good works by it.

9-13. 'Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?' Later Christ entered into the synagogue, and there found a man with a withered hand. Here the question was put to Christ, 'Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?', but it was asked not for instruction but that his opposers might find some cause for accusation in him. They had apparently not yet given up all hope of catching him on the question of Sabbath keeping. If the needs of the body required one to pluck corn on the Sabbath, and this was shown to be right, how about healing the body? A man with a withered hand was not suffering in a manner which would not allow of his healing being postponed till the next day. Would Christ, then, heal him on the Sabbath?

Christ answers by showing that, if it be right, as implied by his question, to lift a sheep from a pit, it is even still better to heal a man on the Sabbath. It was better for the man to be well and happy on the day that was made for man's good, than for him to continue with his withered

hand, and the sorrow that it caused him. So he healed the man without further discussion.

If phrases current in our day had been employed at the time of this lesson, Christ would have been called 'broad minded' and 'liberal' in his views. So, in the right sense, he was, and we enjoy to-day 'the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.'

But liberty to rise to a higher spiritual plane, and which gives a better knowledge of the will of God, is not to be confounded with license to run after temporal pleasures. It was right for the disciples to pluck a little corn to satisfy immediate hunger, but not to engage in reaping the field, or in making a great feast, on the Sabbath.

C. H. Mackintosh, in his 'Notes on Deuteronomy,' in which he discusses the Sabbath question at some length, says, 'The very thought of any one professing to love Christ engaging in business or unnecessary travelling on the Lord's day, would, in our judgment, be revolting to every pious feeling. We believe it to be a hallowed privilege to retire, as much as possible, from all the distractions of natural things, and to devote the hours of the Lord's day to himself and to his service.'

The lesson for February 28 is, 'Hearers and Doers of the Word.' Matthew vii., 21-29.

## C. E. Topic

Sunday, Feb. 21.—Topic—Some good ways of using the Sabbath. Mark i., 21-34.

## Junior C. E. Topic.

## HOW THE CHINESE LIVE.

Monday, Feb. 15.—'In the regions beyond.' II. Cor. x., 16.

Tuesday, Feb. 16.—'They being ignorant.' Rom. x., 3.

Wednesday, Feb. 17.—'Without a preacher.' Rom. x., 14.

Thursday, Feb. 18.—'Without the true God.' II. Chron. xv., 3.

Friday, Feb. 19.—'Without Christ.' Eph. ii., 12.

Saturday, Feb. 20.—'Without faith.' Heb. xi., 6.

Sunday, Feb. 21.—Topic—How the Chinese live. Rom. x., 14, 15.

## Excuseless Excuses.

Excuses grow on every bush. You can find them everywhere. The easiest one to find is 'I am too busy.' So busy often that no little flower of heavenly mindedness can find a place large enough or a chance encouraging enough to grow. If you want a thing done do you go to the idler, the one on whose hands time hangs heavily? Why not?

We have just been made acquainted with the facts in the life of a worker in Massachusetts. He is a busy plumber and he often rounds up a hard day's work by sitting up till midnight writing articles and 'chalk talks' for a well-known Sunday-school journal and then starts out every Sunday morning to gather in a contingent of some thirty or more children from outlying districts, using an old vehicle of which he is both driver and proprietor, and then spends the rest of a happy Sunday teaching and singing and helping in every possible way in the Sunday-school. This is but one of many illustrations. Busy time is the best time. It is the most fruitful and the only time that has the promise of a blessing. He who can do much can do a little more. Don't offer the 'excuseless excuse.'—'Living Epistle.'

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