

## Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

### *Five characteristic principles of the Christian era*

*'At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath! But He said to them, Have*

*you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice", you would not have condemned the guiltless.*

*For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath'.*

Matthew 12:1-8

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This passage in the Gospel of Matthew contains five important principles or guidelines for believers in the present dispensation, in which the Lord has been rejected by the majority of His earthly people Israel, something that also happened to His predecessor John the Baptist (cf. the connection with Matt. 11).

(1) During the time of His rejection, Jesus and His followers enter as priests into God's sanctuary. Similarly, David and his men had entered the house of God and taken the showbread to eat (vv. 3-4). As Christians we have a heavenly calling and a heavenly priesthood. We have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. And we have a great High Priest over the house of God – the exalted Lord at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:19-22).

(2) The sanctuary of God is our refuge, where we can feed on Christ, the true Bread from heaven. The showbread also speaks of the heavenly position of the Church in God's presence. The twelve loaves symbolize the people of God, made acceptable in Christ and brought into God's presence by Him. When the priests in the temple performed their service on the Sabbath, they were *not* guilty of profaning the Sabbath (v. 5). As priests of God and of Christ we are free to enter the heavenly sanctuary "on the Sabbath", that is to enter into God's rest by the Spirit on the basis of the accomplished work of redemption (Heb. 4:8-11). We have peace with God and we enjoy the peace of God as well (Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7).

(3) Christ could say, "In this place there is One greater than the temple" (v. 6). He was even greater than

Solomon, the builder of the earthly temple of God (v. 42). All the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily (John. 2:21; Col. 2:9). The temple of Christ's body also speaks of the Church, the present dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22). This replaces any earthly temple.

(4) The motto of the new dispensation is, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (v. 7). Legalism, however, will always lead to the condemnation of innocent people and the (self) exaltation of the religious establishment. The above word of the Lord is taken from the prophet Hosea, "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6). The Lord cited the same words from the book of Hosea when he called the apostle Matthew (Matt. 9:13). He had not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners. We too ought to be showing mercy, for we are still living in the day of grace.

(5) The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath (v. 8). Christ is Lord, the One who determines our rule of conduct (and this we find in the rest of the New Testament). But this is also a prophetic reference to the age to come, the Kingdom of Peace, when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11). He is Lord of all, the Heir of all things (Acts. 10:36; Eph. 1:22). Upon His return to this earth He will assume His government; then a true sabbath rest will begin for the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

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