

Series Title: "John's Gospel of Jesus: God in Flesh"

Today's Title:

"Overshadowing God with Sabbath Debates"

Scripture Reading: John 5:9c-17

Text: John 5:10

So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

Introduction: (Illustrations from Tan #3043 and Green #766)

- Dr. Wilbur M. Smith relates the following:

During the afternoon, I asked Dr. Klausner (professor in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem) if he would sign my autograph album to which he replied, "No, I am sorry; but it is the Sabbath." I did not know until I made the inquiry that night that the Talmud asserts that writing 2 words in succession is work, and if a man even signs his name on the Sabbath he has broken the law.

As those of us gathered in his study discussing one subject after another, Dr. Klausner would climb a little stepladder and bring down some heavy tome from his shelves, open it, point to some relevant passage, then return the book and soon take down another. The Talmud says nothing about bringing down books from shelves as work: to write 2 words would be labor, but to develop a perspiration by reaching up for volumes & vigorously discussing them is not work!

This is a good illustration of what Jesus meant when he talked about his contemporaries "holding the tradition of the elders."

The sin of the Pharisees was paying attention to outward demonstrations of piety for appearance's sake rather than giving attention to inward obedience. This can well be illustrated by 2 eggs. One egg is a normal raw egg that, when placed under the palm of the hand and pressed evenly cannot be broken because of the structure of the egg itself. The 2nd egg is exactly the same on the outside, but its insides have been removed. When it is placed under the same palm pressure, it breaks easily because it is internally weak. So, too, one who gives himself to the sin of the Pharisees is empty of substance and will eventually crack under pressure.

Premise: *God-talk without God is like breathing without air*

Outline:

I. Unreasonable Allegations

II. Unceasing Argumentation

III. Unyielding Autonomy

I. UNREASONABLE ALLEGATIONS

A. The law is God

- Def. of Sabbath = *to cease, to rest, to interrupt*

- c/w Genesis 2:1-3

- c/w Exodus 20:8-11

- from McClintock and Strong, Vol. IX, p.197

“To sanctify this day, we should consider it – (1) a day of rest; not, indeed, to exclude works of mercy and charity, but a cessation from all labor and care; (2) as a day of remembrance; of creation, preservation, redemption; (3) as a day of meditation and prayer, in which we should cultivate communion with God; (4) as a day of public worship; (5) as a day of joy; (6) as a day of praise; (7) as a day of anticipation, looking forward to that holy, happy, and eternal Sabbath which remains for the people of God.”

- c/w Matthew 12:1-14

B. Illness reflects a sinner’s state

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon *2,200 Quotations*, pp.190-191

I doubt not that many sickbeds in England are doing more for Christ than our pulpits. Oh, what showers of blessings come down in answer to the prayers and tears of poor godly invalids, whose weakness is their strength, and whose sickness is their opportunity!

It is an atrocious lie that some have uttered when they have said that the sickness is a consequence of the sufferer’s sin. I could not select, out of heaven, choicer spirits than some whom I know who have not for twenty years left their bed, and they have lived nearer to God than any of us, and have brought to

him more glory than any of us. Although we deeply sympathize with them, we might almost covet their suffering, because God is so greatly glorified in them. All over the world there is a brave band of these burden-bearers.

I should not like to have lived forty years in this world without ever having suffered sickness. When I met with a man that never had an ache or a pain or a day's sickness in his life, I used to envy him. But I do not now, because I feel very confident that he is a loser by his unvarying experience. How can a man sympathize with trouble that he never knew? How can he be tender in heart if he has never been touched with infirmity himself? If one is to be a comforter to others, he must know the sorrows and the sicknesses of others in his measure. It was essential to our Lord, and certainly what was essential to him is necessary to those who are to be shepherds of others, as he was.

C. Righteousness is established by strict obedience

e.g. It was alright for the man to stand and walk, but not to carry a load over a certain weight limit

Note: With a supposed strict adherence to the law, where was compassion for a man who had never been able to stand or walk?

c/w James 1:27

c/w Matthew 23:1-15

c/w Colossians 3:12-17

II. UNCEASING ARGUMENTATION

A. Jesus does not fit in with the religious elite

v.12 "Who is the man who said to you....?"

- Hymn by Doane, #280

***Thou art the way; to thee alone
From sin and death we flee;
And he who would the Father seek,
Must seek him, Lord, through thee.***

*Thou art the truth; thy word alone
True wisdom can impart;
Thou, only, canst instruct the mind,
And purify the heart.*

*Thou art the life; the rending tomb
Proclaims thy conquering arm;
And those who put their trust in thee,
Nor death nor hell shall harm.*

*Thou art the way, the truth, the life;
Grant us to know that way,
That truth to keep, that life to win,
Which lead to endless day.*

B. Jesus, the Word of God, is the absolute revealer of God

v.16 *“And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.”*

c/w Matthew 11:28-30

c/w Hebrews 3:1-3, 4:1-10

C. Endless debate tends to overlook the sinner’s need

- William Hendriksen

“No longer continue in sin,” rather shows that Jesus is referring not to what supposedly happened more than thirty-eight years ago but to the present condition of the man. Right now he was in the state of being unreconciled with God. Jesus knew this. Hence, he warns him not to continue in this condition. Otherwise there is in store for him something worse than the physical illness from which so recently he had been delivered. Is it not probable that by “something worse” Jesus meant to indicate eternal punishment? From this it is clear that the account does not contain a single word with reference to the cause of the man’s physical illness.”

- A.W. Pink

“The Lord had withdrawn from the man. Christ had retired in order that he might be tested. New strength had been given him; opportunity was then afforded for him to use it. The restored sufferer did not falter. The One who had saved him was obeyed as Lord. The Jewish critics had not intimidated him. That a work of grace had been wrought in his soul as well as in his body is evidenced by the fact that he had gone to the House of Prayer and Praise. And there, we are told, the Lord Jesus found him. This is most blessed. Christ was not to be met with in the throng, but He was to be found in the temple!

Having dealt in “grace” with the poor helpless sufferer Christ now applied the “truth”. “Sin no more” is a word for his conscience. Grace does not ignore the requirements of God’s holiness: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not!” is still the standard set before us. “Lest a worse thing come unto thee” reminds us that the believer is still subject to the government of God. “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap” is addressed to believers, not unbelievers. If we sin we shall suffer chastisement. Bishop Ryle has pointed out that there is here an important message for those who have been raised from a bed of sickness. “Sin no more”: renewed health ought to send us back into the world with a greater hatred for sin, a more thorough watchfulness over our ways, a greater determination to live for God’s glory.”

III. UNYIELDING AUTONOMY

A. Man, a created being, believes he is lord of the Sabbath

contr/w Daniel 7:9-14

B. The whole Sabbath debate functions without God

Note: The key elements in the debate:

1. The Jewish leaders
2. The healed paralytic
3. The Sabbath day
4. The requirements of Jewish law
5. The definition and activities of strenuous labor

Note: In all the endless debate, God is not considered

in any of it except as His existence and working
will serve to gratify the participants.

c/w I Samuel 15:17-23

**C. The Godhead works in union to bring saving rest
from sin**

v.17

- Hymn by Isaac Watts, *Mystical Verse*, pp.34-35

*Not all the blood of beasts,
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.*

*But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they.*

*My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.*

*My soul looks back, to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there.*

*Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing His bleeding love.*

Conclusion: (Illustration from Green #765)

Sometimes we tend to be amazed at the minutia of Pharisaic legalism. We tend to forget, however, that sandwiched among

our country's sound and workable statutes, there are hundreds of cockeyed ordinances that remain to clutter up our law books because the powers that be, from state legislators to town fathers, have not gotten around to repealing them. For instance, in Amarillo, Texas, it is against the law to take a bath on main street during banking hours. In Portland, Oregon, it is illegal to wear roller skates in public restrooms. In Halethorpe, Maryland, a kiss lasting more than a second is an illegal act. The list goes on and on. Suffice it to say that down through history man has been inclined to live by and enforce the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law.

Premise: *God-talk without God is like breathing without air*