

TEACHING GOAL

To study the issue of making a distinction between days, namely, the distinction between the Sabbath and the other six days of the week.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What is required in the fourth commandment?
- A. The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to Himself.
- Q. Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?
- A. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.

S.C. 58-59, L.C. 116, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 87-89

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

- Study Passage:** Romans 14:1-12
- Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 5:12-14; Genesis 2:2-3; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10

BIBLE STORY

Numbers 15:32-36: A man gathers sticks on the Sabbath.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Romans 14:7-8

7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

APPLICATION

God forbid that we should seek to overthrow what God has established. We must not argue about differentiating the days of the week. God tells us to keep the Sabbath-day holy and we are to do just that. Furthermore, each one of us will give an account of ourselves to God in this matter because we belong to Him.

SUMMARY

The study text for this lesson was chosen because it is urged by many to support the contention that we should not separate one day of seven unto the Lord. "Every day is the Lord's day," it is said, because Paul writes in Romans 14:5, "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind." The context would seem to indicate that either position on the Sabbath is tenable following the analogy of vegetarianism as opposed to eating meat.

"The question is whether the weekly Sabbath comes within the scope of the distinction respecting days on which the apostle reflects in Romans 14:5. If so then we have to reckon with the following implications."¹

A. This would mean that we are not now bound by the fourth commandment. In fact, if there is to be no special day of the week designated as a Sabbath to the Lord, then those who keep the Sabbath holy are guilty of "Judaizing". That is to say we would be guilty of upholding a ceremonial law which was abrogated by the death of Christ.

B. This would mean that there is no special significance to the first day of the week. The resurrection of Christ would not be commemorated by the Christian Sabbath on the first day or any other day of the week.

C. One would conclude that in this case the person who kept the Sabbath holy is the weaker brother who had not yet attained the more mature position that all days are alike.

On the other hand, the Sabbath-day is a creation ordinance as was set forth in last week's lesson. Not being instituted at the time the Ten Commandments were given to Moses, the Sabbath has no relevance to the ceremonial law. The same can be said for all of the Ten Commandments. God's Moral Law was not instituted on Mount Sinai rather it was reiterated in stone having been in force since creation.

In addition, the first day of the week was, in fact, the day of Christ's resurrection. This day of the week was known in the early church as the "Lord's Day" as the apostle John also mentions, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day..."² Paul preached in the church at Troas on the first day of the week, the special day upon which the church gathered to observe the Lord's Supper (breaking bread refers to the fellowship meal which preceded the Eucharist). On the first day of the week, when the Corinthian church gathered for worship, a collection was to be gathered as was also done in the Galatian church.³ The first

day of the week, therefore, had special religious significance in the early church and we today are not to despise it.

All this notwithstanding, the text in Romans 14 does speak to ceremonial feast days other than the Sabbath. We may conclude that Paul places no special emphasis on any religious feast day except for the Sabbath-day and indeed the weaker brother is the one who insists on observing these ceremonial feasts. Similarly it is the weaker brother who insists on circumcision and on abstinence from eating meat. In matters such as these we are to learn that whether we live or die we belong to the Lord. He owns us and loves us with an everlasting love. We are not to hold our brothers in contempt nor are we to judge one another because we will all stand before the judgement-seat of God to give an account of the things we have done in this life. Let us remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.

¹ John Murray, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Epistle to the Romans, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1968, p257.

² Rev 1:10

³ I Corinthians 16:2