

Healing on the Sabbath Day

Key Verse: “[Jesus] answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?” —Luke 14:5

Selected Scripture: Luke 14:1-6

JESUS NEVER REFUSED AN invitation to present the Truth. In today’s Selected Scripture we are told that the Pharisees “watched him.” (Luke 14:1) They were evidently hoping to catch the Lord breaking one of the Law’s prohibitions, especially that of working on the Sabbath. The Law read, “The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.”—Exod. 20:10

Part of the Law’s requirement was that food was prohibited from being gathered and otherwise specially prepared on the Sabbath. The scriptural account of collecting manna in the wilderness included instructions from Jehovah that a double portion must be gathered on the sixth day of the week. No manna would appear on the seventh day, for it was to be a Sabbath day of rest. (Exod. 16:13-26) Additionally, the Law even prohibited the lighting of fire in their homes on the Sabbath. (Exod. 35:3) Therefore, the Israelites prepared a double portion of meals on the sixth day.

Returning to our lesson, as Jesus entered the house of one of the Pharisees there appeared before him a man with the dropsy, an incurable disease at that time. (Luke

14:2) We are not told if the Pharisees positioned the man before Jesus, or if he had entered this semi-public feast on his own in the hope that the Lord would cure him. Nevertheless, here stood a man with a life-threatening disease. Would Jesus heal on the Sabbath or not?

Clearly understanding the Pharisees' motive, Jesus disarmed them by asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" (vs. 3) The Jewish religious leaders were expected to be able and willing to answer such questions asked by the people at any time. Yet in the presence of the great Master they held their peace, eager to see what course he would take. Hearing no objection to healing on the Sabbath day being cited from the Law, our Lord performed the miracle. "He took him, and healed him, and let him go." (vs. 4) The implication is that perhaps Jesus merely touched the afflicted one, so it might be more manifest that the miracle was of divine power through him.

Our Lord answered his own question by the miracle, and thus proved that nothing in the Law forbade the healing of the sick on the Sabbath. He then justified his course before the company by his further question found in the words of our Key Verse. The Pharisees were again silent before Jesus, knowing that where their personal interests and property were involved, they would decide that there was nothing in the Law to hinder extending such assistance on the Sabbath. Thus, our Lord removed the notion that the healing of someone on the Sabbath was a violation of God's Law.

Jesus had a proper reverence and respect for the Jewish Sabbath. Similarly, our celebration of the first day of the week as a Christian day of rest and worship should not be with the thought that we are in bondage to it as a law. Furthermore, let us treat with great appreciation the privilege we have of being able to leave one day behind—resting from—the affairs of this life, that we may focus on the hope of helping to bless all the families of the earth in the next age.—Heb. 4:9-11; Gen.22:18; Acts 3:24,25 ■