
a *Grace Notes* course

History II

The Temple

Its Ministry and Services as they were at the time of Christ
by Alfred Edersheim

Lesson 9 – Chapter 9, The Sabbath in the Temple

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Contents

Chapter 9, The Sabbath in the Temple	1
The Law Not A Burden, But A Gift.....	1
Later Perversion of the Sabbath	1
The Schools of Shammai and Hillel.....	2
Scripture Rules for the Sabbath.....	3
The Shewbread	4
The Table on the Arch of Titus	4
The Vessels of the Table	4
The Shewbread Itself.....	5
The Mode of Changing	5
The Symbolism of the Shewbread.....	6
The Courses on the Sabbath	6
The Sabbatical Year	7
Scripture References To It/The 'Prosbul'	7
The Effect Of It	8
Rabbinical Perversion of the Sabbatical Year	8
Quiz - Instructions.....	9
Questions on The Temple, Lesson 9	9

Instructions for Completing the Lesson

Begin each study session with prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who makes spiritual things discernable to Christians, so it is essential to be in fellowship with the Lord during Bible study.

Instructions

1. Read the lesson notes carefully.
 2. Look up and study each passage of the Bible that is mentioned.
 3. Complete the answers to the QUIZ and send your response to Grace Notes. The instructions for returning the Quiz are at the end of the lesson.
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Chapter 9, The Sabbath in the Temple

The Law Not A Burden, But A Gift

It is a beautifully significant practice of the modern Jews, that, before fulfilling any special observance directed in their Law, they always first bless God for the giving of it. One might almost compare the idea underlying this, and much else of a similar character in the present religious life of Israel, to the good fruits which the soil of Palestine bore even during the Sabbatical years, when it lay untilled. For it is intended to express that the Law is felt not a burden, but a gift of God in which to rejoice. And this holds specially true of the Sabbath in its Divine institution, of which it was distinctly said, 'I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I, Jehovah, sanctify them' (Eze 20:12). In the same sense, the Sabbath is called 'a delight, the holy of Jehovah, honourable' (Isa 58:13); and the great burden of the Sabbath-Psalm (Psa 92)¹ is that of joyous thanksgiving unto God.

The term Sabbath, 'resting,' points to the origin and meaning of the weekly festival. The Rabbis hold that it was not intended for the Gentiles, and most of them trace the obligation of its observance only to the legislation on Mount Sinai. Nor is another Rabbinical saying, that 'circumcision and the Sabbath preceded the law,' inconsistent with this. For even if the duty of Sabbath-observance had only commenced with the promulgation of the law on Mount Sinai, yet the Sabbath-law itself rested on the original 'hallowing' of the seventh day, when God rested from all His works (Gen

¹ The Talmud discusses the question whether Psalm 92 bears reference to the Sabbath of creation, or to that final Messianic Sabbath of the Kingdom--according to Rabbi Akibah, 'the day which is wholly a Sabbath.' (See Delitzsch on the Psalm.) It is a curiously uncritical remark of some Rabbis to ascribe the authorship of this Psalm to Adam, and its composition to the beginning of the first Sabbath--Adam having fallen just before its commencement, and been driven from Paradise, but not killed, because God would not execute the punishment of death on the Sabbath.

2:3). But this was not the only rest to which the Sabbath pointed. There is also a rest of redemption, and the Sabbath was expressly connected with the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. 'Remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and that Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore Jehovah thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day' (Deut 5:15). At the close of the work-a-day week, holy rest in the Lord; at the end of the labour and sorrow of Egypt, redemption and rest; and both pointing forward to the better rest (Heb 4:9), and ultimately to the eternal Sabbath of completed work, of completed redemption, and completed 'hallowing' (Rev 11)--such was the meaning of the weekly Sabbath. It was because this idea of festive rest and sanctification was so closely connected with the weekly festival that the term Sabbath was also applied to the great festivals (as Lev 23:15,24,32,39). For a similar reason, the number seven, which was that of the weekly Sabbath (the first seven that had appeared in time), became in Scripture-symbolism the sacred or covenant number.²

Later Perversion of the Sabbath

It is necessary to bear all this in remembrance when thinking of what the perverted ingenuity of the Rabbis made the Sabbath at the time of Christ, and probably even more in the generations following. For there is evidence that the Sabbath-law has become stricter than it had been, since, for instance, the practice of taking an ox or an ass out of a pit, to which our Saviour alludes (Luke 14:5) as uncontroverted, would now no longer be lawful, unless, indeed, the animal were in actual danger of life; otherwise, it is to receive food and water in the pit. This 'actual danger to life,' whether to beast

² The term 'Sabbath' is also applied to 'a week,' as in Leviticus 23:15; 25:8; and, for example, in Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1. This seems to indicate that the Sabbath was not to be regarded as separate from, but as giving its character to the rest of the week, and to its secular engagements. So to speak, the week closes and is completed in the Sabbath.

or to man (at any rate, to Israelites), determined the only cases in which a breach of the law of Sabbath-observance was allowed.

At the outset, indeed, it must be admitted that the whole social Rabbinical legislation on the subject seems to rest on two sound underlying principles: negatively, the avoidance of all that might become work; and, positively, the doing of all which, in the opinion of the Rabbis, might tend to make the Sabbath 'a delight.' Hence, not only were fasting and mourning strictly prohibited, but food, dress, and every manner of enjoyment, not incompatible with abstinence from work, were prescribed to render the day pleasurable. 'All the days of the week,' the Rabbis say, 'has God paired, except the Sabbath, which is alone, that it may be wedded to Israel.' Israel was to welcome the Sabbath as a bride; its advent as that of a king.

But in practice all this terribly degenerated. Readers of the New Testament know how entirely, and even cruelly, the spirit and object of the Sabbath were perverted by the traditions of 'the elders.' But those only who have studied the Jewish law on the subject can form any adequate conception of the state of matters. Not to speak of the folly of attempting to produce joy by prescribed means, nor of the incongruousness of those means, considering the sacred character of the day, the almost numberless directions about avoiding work must have made a due observance of the Sabbath-rest the greatest labour of all.

All work was arranged under thirty-nine chief classes, or 'fathers,' each of them having ever so many 'descendants,' or subordinate divisions. Thus, 'reaping' was one of the 'fathers,' or chief classes, and 'plucking ears of corn' one of its descendants. So far did this punctiliousness go that it became necessary to devise ingenious means to render the ordinary intercourse of life possible, and to evade the inconvenient strictness of the law which regulated a 'Sabbath-day's journey.'³

³ By depositing a meal of meat at the end of a Sabbath-day's journey to make it, by a legal fiction, a man's domicile, from which he might start on a fresh Sabbath-day's journey. The Mishnic tractate Eruvin treats of the connecting of

The Schools of Shammai and Hillel

The school of Shammai, the sect of the Essenes, and strange to say, the Samaritans, were the most stringent in their Sabbath-observance. The school of Shammai held that the duty of Sabbath-rest extended not only to men and to beasts, but even to inanimate objects, so that no process might be commenced on the Friday which would go on of itself during the Sabbath, such as laying out flax to dry, or putting wool into dye. The school of Hillel excluded inanimate things from the Sabbath-rest, and also allowed work to be given on a Friday to Gentiles, irrespective of the question whether they could complete it before the Sabbath began. Both schools allowed the preparation of the Passover-meal on the Sabbath, and also priests, while on their ministry in the Temple, to keep up the fire in the 'Beth Moked.'

But this punctilious enforcement of the Sabbath-rest became occasionally dangerous to the nation. For at one time the Jews would not even defend themselves on the Sabbath against hostile attacks of armies, till the Maccabees laid down the principle, which ever afterwards continued in force (Jos. Anti. xii. 6, 2; xiv. 4, 2.), that defensive, though not offensive, warfare was lawful on the holy day. Even as thus modified, the principle involved peril, and during the last siege of Jerusalem it was not uniformly carried out (compare Jewish Wars, ii. 19, 2, but, on the other hand, Antiq. xiv. 4, 2.). Nor was it, so far as we can judge from analogy (Josh 6:15, etc), sanctioned by Scripture precedent. But this is not the place further to explain either the

houses, courts, etc., to render lawful the carrying out of food, etc. On the other hand, such an isolated expression occurs (Mechilta, ed. Weiss, p. 110 a): 'The Sabbath is given to you, not you to the Sabbath.' If we might regard this as a current theological saying, it would give a fresh meaning to the words of our Lord, Mark 2:27.

Scripture or the Rabbinical law of Sabbath-observance, as it affected the individual, the home, and the social life, nor yet to describe the Sabbath-worship in the ancient synagogues of Palestine. We confine our attention to what passed in the Temple itself.

Scripture Rules for the Sabbath

The only directions given in Scripture for the celebration of the Sabbath in the sanctuary are those which enjoin 'a holy convocation,' or a sacred assembly (Lev 23:3); the weekly renewal of the shewbread (Lev 24:8; Num 4:7); and an additional burnt-offering of two lambs, with the appropriate meat- and drink-offerings, 'beside the continual' (that is, the ordinary daily) 'burnt-offering and his drink-offering' (Num 28:9,10). But the ancient records of tradition enable us to form a very vivid conception of Sabbath-worship in the Temple at the time of Christ. Formally, the Sabbath commenced at sunset on Friday, the day being reckoned by the Hebrews from sunset to sunset. As no special hour for this was fixed, it must, of course, have varied not only at different seasons, but in different localities. Thus, the Rabbis mention that the inhabitants of a low-lying city, like Tiberias, commenced the observance of the Sabbath half an hour earlier, while those who lived on an eminence, such as at Sepphoris, continued it half an hour later than their brethren.

[Sepphoris, the Dio-Caesarea of the Romans, was near Nazareth. It is often referred to by Josephus, and, after the destruction of Jerusalem, became for a time the seat of the Sanhedrim. (See Robinson's Researches in Pal. vol. ii. p. 345.)]

If the sun were not visible, sunset was to be reckoned from when the fowls went to roost. But long before that the preparations for the Sabbath had commenced. Accordingly, Friday is called by the Rabbis 'the eve of the Sabbath,' and in the

Gospels 'the preparation' ⁴ (Mark 15:42; John 19:31)

No fresh business was then undertaken; no journey of any distance commenced; but everything purchased and made ready against the feast, the victuals being placed in a heated oven, and surrounded by dry substances to keep them warm. Early on Friday afternoon, the new 'course' of priests, of Levites, and of the 'stationary men,' who were to be the representatives of all Israel, arrived in Jerusalem, and having prepared themselves for the festive season, went up to the Temple. The approach of the Sabbath, and then its actual commencement, were announced by threefold blasts from the priests' trumpets. The first three blasts were drawn when 'one-third of the evening sacrifice service was over'; or, as we gather from the decree by which the Emperor Augustus set the Jews free from attendance in courts of law (Jos. Ant. xvi. 6, 2.), about the ninth hour, that is, about three p.m. on Friday. This, as we remember, was the hour when Jesus gave up the ghost (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:44).

When the priests for the first time sounded their trumpets, all business was to cease, and every kind of work to be stopped. Next, the Sabbath-lamp, of which even heathen writers knew (Seneca, ep. 95.), was lit, and the festive garments put on. A second time the priests drew a threefold blast, to indicate that the Sabbath had actually begun. But the service of the new 'course' of priests had commenced before that. After the Friday evening service, the altar of burnt-offering was cleansed from its stains of blood. The altar was whitened twice a year, before the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. But no tool of iron was used in this.

Then the outgoing 'course' handed over to the incoming the keys of the sanctuary, the holy vessels, and all else of which they had had charge. Next the heads of the 'houses' or families of the

⁴ The expression, Luke 6:1, rendered in our version 'the second Sabbath after the first,' really means, 'the first Sabbath after the second' day of the Passover, on which the first ripe sheaf was presented, the Jews calculating the weeks from that day to Pentecost.

incoming 'course' determined by lot which of the families were to serve on each special day of their week of ministry, and also who were to discharge the various priestly functions on the Sabbath.

The Shewbread

The first of these functions, immediately on the commencement of the Sabbath, was the renewal of the 'shewbread.' It had been prepared by the incoming course before the Sabbath itself, and--we might almost say, invariably--in one of the chambers of the Temple, though, in theory, it was held lawful to prepare it also at Bethphage. For, although it was a principle that 'there is no Sabbath in the sanctuary,' yet no work was allowed which might have been done on any other day. Even circumcision, which, like the Temple services, according to the Rabbis, superseded the Sabbath, was deferred by some to the close of the festive day. Hence, also, if Friday, on the afternoon of which the shewbread was ordinarily prepared, fell on a feast day that required Sabbatical rest, the shewbread was prepared on the Thursday afternoon. The Rabbis are at pains to explain the particular care with which it was made and baked, so that in appearance and colour the lower should be exactly the same as the upper part of it.

But this subject is too important to be thus briefly treated. Our term 'shewbread' is a translation of that used by Luther (Schaubrod), which, in turn, may have been taken from the Vulgate (*panes praepositionis*). The Scriptural name is 'Bread of the Face' (Exo 25:30; 35:13; 39:36); that is, 'of the presence of God,' just as the similar expression, 'Angel of the Face' (Isa 63:9) means the 'Angel of His Presence.' From its constant presence and disposition in the sanctuary, it is also called 'perpetual bread' (Num 4:7) and 'bread of laying out' (set in order), which latter most nearly corresponds to the term used in the New Testament (Matt 12:4; Luke 6:4; Heb 9:2). The placing and weekly renewal of the 'Bread of the Presence' was evidently among the principal Temple services (2 Chron 13:10,11). The 'table of

shewbread' stood along the northern, or most sacred side of the Holy Place, being ranged lengthways of the Temple, as all its furniture was, except the Ark of the Covenant, which stood broadways.

The Table on the Arch of Titus

As described by the Rabbis, and represented on the triumphal Arch of Titus at Rome, the table of shewbread was two cubits long (two cubits = three feet), one cubit broad, and one and a half high.⁵

It was made of pure gold, the feet being turned out and shaped to represent those of animals, and the legs connected, about the middle, by a golden plate, which was surrounded by a 'crown,' or wreath, while another wreath ran round the top of the table. Thus far its form was the same as that made at the first for the tabernacle (Exo 25:23, etc.), which was of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold. The 'table' originally provided for the second Temple had been taken away by Antiochus Epiphanes (about 170 BC); but another was supplied by the Maccabees. Josephus tells a story (Anti. xii. 2, 8) about the gift of yet another and most splendid one by Ptolemy Philadelphus. But as its description does not tally with the delineations on the Arch of Titus, we infer that at the time of Christ the 'table' of the Maccabees stood in the Holy Place.

The Vessels of the Table

Considerable doubt exists as to the precise meaning of the terms used in Scripture to describe the golden vessels connected with the 'table of shewbread' (Exo 25:29). The 'dishes' are generally regarded as those on which the 'shewbread' was either carried or placed, the 'spoons' as destined for the

⁵ The table on the Arch of Titus seems only one cubit high. We know that it was placed by the victor in the Temple of Peace; was carried about the middle of the fifth century to Africa, by the Vandals under Genseric, and that Belisarius brought it back in 520 to Constantinople, whence it was sent to Jerusalem.

incense, and the 'covers,' or rather 'flagons,' and the 'bowls' for the wine of the drink-offering. On the Arch of Titus there are also two urns. But all this does not prove, in the silence of Scripture, and against the unanimous testimony of tradition, that either flagons, or bowls, or urns were placed on the table of shewbread, nor that drink-offerings were ever brought into the 'Holy Place.' On the other hand, the Rabbis regard the Hebrew terms, rendered 'covers' and 'bowls,' as referring to hollow golden tubes which were placed between the shewbread so as to allow the air to circulate between them; three of these tubes being always put under each, except the highest, under which there were only two, while the lowest rested on the table itself, or, rather, on a golden dish upon it.

Thus they calculate that there were, in all, twenty-eight of these tubes to support the twelve loaves. The 'tubes' were drawn out each Friday, and again inserted between the new shewbread each Sunday, since the task of removing and reinserting them was not among those labours which made 'void the Sabbath.' Golden dishes, in which the shewbread was carried, and golden lateral plates, further to protect it on the stand, are also mentioned by the Rabbis.

The Shewbread Itself

The 'shewbread' was made of the finest wheaten flour, that had been passed through eleven sieves. There were twelve of these cakes, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, ranged in two piles, each of six cakes. Each cake was made of two omers of wheat (the omer = about five pints). Between the two rows, not upon them (as according to the Rabbis) (Menach. xi. 5), two bowls with pure incense were placed, and, according to Egyptian tradition (LXX Lev 24:7; Philo ii. 151), also salt. The cakes were anointed in the middle with oil, in the form of a cross. As described by Jewish tradition, they were each

five handbreadths broad and ten handbreadths long, but turned up at either end, two handbreadths on each side, to resemble in outline the Ark of the Covenant. Thus, as each cake, after being 'turned up,' reached six handbreadths and was placed lengthwise on the breadth of the table, it would exactly cover it (the one cubit of the table being reckoned at six handbreadths); while, as the two rows of six cakes stood broadwise against each other (2 x 5 handbreadths), it would leave between them two handbreadths vacant on the length of the table (2 cubits = 12 handbreadths), on which the two bowls with the incense were placed.

The preparation of the shewbread seems to have been hereditarily preserved as a secret family tradition in 'the house of Garmu,' a family of the Kohathites (1 Chron 9:32; Mish. Shekal. v. 1). The fresh cakes of shewbread were deposited in a golden dish on the marble table in the porch of the sanctuary, where they remained till the Sabbath actually commenced.

The Mode of Changing

The mode of changing the shewbread may be given in the words of the Mishnah (Men. xi. 7): 'Four priests enter (the Holy Place), two carrying, each, one of the piles (of six shewbread), the other two the two dishes (of incense). Four priests had preceded them-- two to take off the two (old) piles of shewbread, and two the two (old) dishes of incense. Those who brought in (the bread and incense) stood at the north side (of the table), facing southwards; they who took away at the south side, facing north: these lifted off, and those replaced; the hands of these being right over against the hands of those (so as to lift off and put on exactly at the same moment), as it is written: "Thou shalt set upon the table bread of the Presence before Me alway." The shewbread which had been taken off was then deposited on the golden table in the porch of the sanctuary, the incense burnt on that heap on the altar of

burnt-offering from which the coals were taken for the altar of incense, after which the shewbread was distributed among the outgoing and the incoming course of priests.

The incoming priests stood at the north side, the outgoing at the south side, and each course gave to the high-priest half of their portion. The shewbread was eaten during the Sabbath, and in the Temple itself, but only by such priests as were in a state of Levitical purity.

The Symbolism of the Shewbread

The importance of the service which has just been described depended, of course, on its meaning. Ancient symbolism, both Jewish and Christian, regarded 'the bread of the Presence' as an emblem of the Messiah. This view is substantially, though not literally, correct. Jehovah, who dwelt in the Most Holy Place between the Cherubim, was the God manifest and worshipped in the Holy Place. There the mediatorial ministry, in the name of, and representing Israel, 'laid before' Him the bread of the Presence, kindled the seven-lamped candlestick, and burnt incense on the golden altar. The 'bread' 'laid before Him' in the northern or most sacred part of the Holy Place was that of His Presence, and meant that the Covenant-people owned 'His Presence' as their bread and their life; the candlestick, that He was their Light-giver and Light; while between the table of shewbread and the candlestick burned the incense on the golden altar, to show that life and light are joined together, and come to us in fellowship with God and prayer.

For a similar reason, pure incense was placed between the shewbread--for, the life which is in His Presence is one of praise; while the incense was burned before the shewbread was eaten by the priests, to indicate God's acceptance and ratification of Israel's dependence upon Him, as also to betoken praise to God while living upon His Presence. That this 'Presence' meant the special manifestation of God, as afterwards fully vouchsafed in Christ, 'the Angel of His Presence,'

it is scarcely necessary to explain at length in this place.

The Courses on the Sabbath

But although the service of the incoming 'course' of priests had begun with the renewal of the 'shewbread,' that of the outgoing had not yet completely ceased. In point of fact, the outgoing 'course' of priests offered the morning sacrifice on the Sabbath, and the incoming the evening sacrifice, both spending the Sabbath in the sanctuary. The inspection of the Temple before the Sabbath morning service differed from that on ordinary days, inasmuch as the Temple itself was lit up, to obviate the necessity of the priests carrying torches on the holy day. The altar of burnt-offering was cleansed before the usual hour; but the morning service commenced later, so as to give an opportunity of attending to as many as possible.

All appeared in their festive garments, and each carried in his hand some contribution for religious purposes. It was no doubt from this that the practice was derived of 'laying by in store upon the first day of the week,' which St. Paul recommended to the Corinthians (1 Cor 16:1,2). Similarly, the apostolic practice of partaking the Lord's Supper every Lord's-day may have been in imitation of the priests eating the shewbread every Sabbath. The Sabbath service was in every respect the same as on other days, except that at the close of the ordinary morning sacrifice the additional offering of two lambs, with its appropriate meat- and drink-offerings, was brought (Num 28:9,10). When the drink-offering of the ordinary morning sacrifice was poured out, the Levites sang Psalm 92 in three sections, the priests drawing, at the close of each, three blasts from their trumpets, and the people worshipping.

At the close of the additional Sabbath sacrifice, when its drink-offering was brought, the Levites sang the 'Song of Moses' in Deuteronomy 32. This 'hymn' was divided into six portions, for as many Sabbaths (v 1-6; 7-12; 13-18; 19-28; 29-39; 40-end). Each portion was sung in three sections with threefold blasts of the priests' trumpets, the people

worshipping at each pause. If a Sabbath and a 'new moon' fell on the same day, the Sabbath hymn was sung in preference to that for the new moon; if a feast day fell on the Sabbath, the Sabbath sacrifice was offered before that prescribed for the day. At the evening sacrifice on the Sabbath the song of Moses in Exodus 15 was sung.

The Sabbatical Year

Though not strictly connected with the Temple services, it may be desirable briefly to refer to the observance of the Sabbatical year, as it was strictly enforced at the time of Christ. It was otherwise with the year of Jubilee. Strangely, there are traces of the latter during the period before the return from Babylon (1 Kings 21:3; Isa 5:8; 37:30; 61:1-3, Eze 1:1; 7:12; Micah 2:2), while the Sabbatical year seems to have been systematically neglected. Hence Jewish tradition explains, in accordance with 2 Chronicles 36:21, that the seventy years' captivity were intended to make up the neglected Sabbatical years--commencing the calculation, if it be taken literally, from about the accession of King Solomon. But while, after the return from Babylon, the year of Jubilee was no longer kept, at least, as a religious ordinance, the Sabbatical year was most strictly observed, not only by the Jews (Neh 10:31; 1 Macc vi. 49, 53; Jos. Antiq. xiii. 8, 1; xiv. 10, 6; xv. 1, 2; Jew. Wars., i. 2-4), but also by the Samaritans (Antiq xi. 8, 6).

Jewish tradition has it, that as it took seven years for the first conquest, and other seven for the proper division of the Holy Land, 'tithes' were for the first time paid fourteen years after the entrance of Israel into Canaan; and the first Sabbatical year fell seven years later, or in the twenty-first year of their possession of Palestine. The Sabbatical law extended only to the soil of Palestine itself, which, however, included certain surrounding districts. The Rabbis add this curious proviso, that it was lawful to use (though not to store or sell) the spontaneous produce of the land throughout the extent originally possessed by Israel, but that even the use of these products was prohibited in such

districts as having originally belonged to, were again occupied by Israel after their return from Babylon. But this, as other rules laid down by the Rabbis, had many exceptions (Mish. Shev. vi. 1).

Scripture References To It/The 'Prosbul'

As Divinely enjoined, the soil was to be left uncultivated at the end of every period of six years, beginning, as the Jews argue, after the Passover for the barley, after Pentecost for the wheat, and after the Feast of Tabernacles for all fruit-trees. The Sabbatical year itself commenced, as most of them hold, on New Year's Day, which fell on the new moon of the tenth month, or Tishri.

Whatever grew of itself during the year was to belong to the poor (Exo 23:10,11), which, however, as Leviticus 25:6 shows, did not exclude its use as 'meat' only its storage and sale, by the family to which the land belonged. Yet a third Scriptural notice constitutes the Sabbatical year that of 'the Lord's release,' when no debt might be claimed from an Israelite (Deut 15:1-6); while a fourth enjoins, that 'in the solemnity of the year of release, in the Feast of Tabernacles,' the law was to be read 'before all Israel in their hearing' (Deut 31:10,11).

It has been strangely overlooked that these four ordinances, instead of being separate and distinct, are in reality closely connected. As the assignment of what grew of itself did not exclude the usufruct by the owners, so it also followed of necessity that, in a year when all agricultural labour ceased, debts should not be claimed from an agricultural population. Similarly, it was quite in accordance with the idea of the Sabbath and the Sabbatical year that the law should be publicly read, to indicate that 'the rest' was not to be one of idleness, but of meditation on the Word of God. Idleness is quite as much contrary to the Sabbath law as labour: 'not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words' (Isa 58:13).

It will be gathered that in this view the Divine law had not intended the absolute remission of debts, but only their 'release' during the Sabbatical year. The manumission of Jewish slaves took place in

the seventh year of their bondage, whenever that might be, and bears no reference to the Sabbatical year, with which, indeed, some of its provisions could not easily have been compatible (Deut 15:14).

Jewish tradition, indeed, holds the opposite; but, by its ordinances, it rendered the law itself void. For, as explained by the Rabbis, the release from debt did not include debts for things purchased in a shop, nor judicial fines, nor yet money lent on a pledge. But, as the great Rabbi Hillel found that even these exceptions were not sufficient to insure the loan of money in view of the Sabbatical year, he devised a formula called 'Prosbul' (probably 'addition,' from a Greek word to the same effect), by which the rights of a creditor were fully secured. The 'Prosbul' ran thus: 'I, A.B., hand to you, the judges of C.D. (a declaration), to the effect that I may claim any debt due to me at whatever time I please.'

The Effect Of It

This 'Prosbul,' signed by the judges or by witnesses, enabled a creditor to claim money lent even in the Sabbatical year; and though professedly applying only to debts on real property, was so worded as to cover every case (Mish. Shev., sec x). But even this was not all, and the following legal fiction was suggested as highly meritorious to all concerned. The debtor was to offer payment, and the creditor to reply, 'I remit'; upon which the debtor was to insist that 'nevertheless' the creditor was to accept the repayment.

In general, money owing to Jewish proselytes was to be repaid to them, but not to their heirs, even though they also had turned Jews, as by becoming a proselyte a man had separated himself from his kin, who therefore were no longer, strictly speaking, his natural heirs. Still, to make payment in such a case was deemed specially meritorious. The Rabbinical evasions of the law, which forbade the use of that which had grown spontaneously on the soil, are not so numerous nor so irrational. It was ruled that part of such products might be laid by in the house, provided sufficient of the same

kind were left in the field for cattle and beasts to feed upon.

Again, as much land might be tilled as was necessary to make payment of tributes or taxes. The omer (or 'wave-sheaf') at the Passover, and the two wave-loaves at Pentecost, were also to be made from the barley and wheat grown that year in the field. Lastly, Rabbinical ordinance fixed the following portions as being 'the law' which was to be publicly read in the Temple by the king or the high-priest at the Feast of Tabernacles in the Sabbatical year, viz., Deuteronomy 1:1-6; 6:4-8; 11:13-22; 14:22; 15:23; 17:14; 26:12-19; 27; 28 (Mish. Sotah, vii. 8). This service concluded with a benediction, which resembled that of the high-priest on the Day of Atonement, except that it referred not to the remission of sins.

Rabbinical Perversion of the Sabbatical Year

The account just given proves that there was scarcely any Divine ordinance, which the Rabbis, by their traditions, rendered more fully void, and converted into 'a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear,' than the Sabbath law. On the other hand, the Gospels bring before us Christ more frequently on the Sabbath than on any other festive occasion. It seemed to be His special day for working the work of His Father. On the Sabbath He preached in the synagogues; He taught in the Temple; He healed the sick; He came to the joyous meal with which the Jews were wont to close the day (Luke 14:1). Yet their opposition broke out most fiercely in proportion as He exhibited the true meaning and object of the Sabbath. Never did the antagonism between the spirit and the letter more clearly appear. And if in their worship of the letter they crushed out the spirit of the Sabbath law, we can scarcely wonder that they so overlaid with their ordinances the appointment of the Sabbatical year as well-nigh to extinguish its meaning. That evidently was, that the earth, and all that is upon it, belongeth to the Lord; that the eyes of all wait upon Him, that He may 'give them their meat

in due season' (Psa 104:27; 145:16); that the land of Israel was His special possession; that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of the Lord; and that He giveth us our daily bread, so that it is vain to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows (Psa 127:2).

Beyond it all, it pointed to the fact of sin and redemption: the whole creation which 'groaneth and travaileth in pain together unto now,' waiting for and expecting that blessed Sabbath, when 'creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the

children of God' (Rom 8:21,22). Thus, as the Sabbath itself, so the Sabbatical year pointed forward to the 'rest which remaineth to the people of God,' when, contest and labour completed, they sing, 'on the other side of the flood,' the song of Moses and of the Lamb (Rev 15:3,4): 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only are holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.'

Quiz - Instructions

The following questions relate to your study of this lesson.

Respond to the questions as required.

You have choices about sending the quiz back to Grace Notes.

- If you received an email file containing the questions, you can use the REPLY feature of your e-mail application to open the file. Enter your responses in the reply message. Then SEND the message to Grace Notes.
- You can enter your answers on these pages, then send the whole file back to Grace Notes as a file attachment. This is handy, but these lessons will average 100K to 200K in size. As an alternative,
- After you answer the questions here, copy and paste the whole list of questions into a new MS Word document; then, send the new file to Grace Notes as an attachment. The new file will, of course, be much smaller than this main file.
- Finally, you can print the Quiz pages on your printer and send your response back to Grace Notes in the regular mail. If you do this, send the mail to:

Grace Notes

% Warren Doud

1705 Aggie Lane

Austin, Texas 78757 USA

Whichever transmission method you use, when Grace Notes receives your response, we will send you the next lesson in the series.

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Questions on The Temple, Lesson 9

1. The Law was not to be considered a _____ but a _____.

Answer:

2. What does the term “Sabbath” mean?

Answer:

3. For purposes of determining what kinds of work were to be avoided on the Sabbath, all work was arranged under _____ classes.

Answer:

4. Plucking ears of corn is considered one of the main classes of work. [True/False]

Answer:

5. What sects of Jews were the most strict in observing the Sabbath?

Answer:

6. Who laid down the principle that defensive warfare was lawful on the Sabbath?

Answer:

7. The actual commencement of the Sabbath was announced by a priest standing on the wall of the Temple and calling people to prayer. [True/False]

Answer:

8. What is the actual scriptural name for the shewbread?

Answer:

9. How much wheat was used in making each cake, or loaf, of shewbread?

Answer:

10. What Psalm was sung by the priests when the drink offering of the morning sacrifice was poured out?

Answer:

End of Quiz
