

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And many Explanatory Notes.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.,

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,
RECTOR OF HELMINGHAM, SUFFOLK;

Author of "Home Truths," &c.

ST. MARK.

IPSWICH:

WILLIAM HUNT, STEAM PRESS, TAVERN STREET.

LONDON:

WERTHEIM, MACINTOSH, & HUNT, 24, PATERNOSTER ROW;
23, HOLLES STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

MDCCCLIX.

MARK II. 1–12.

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed where-in the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the Scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blas-

phemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

THIS passage shows us our Lord once more at Capernaum. Once more we find Him doing His accustomed work, preaching the word, and healing those that were sick.

We see, in these verses, *what great spiritual privileges some persons enjoy, and yet make no use of them.*

This is a truth which is strikingly illustrated by the history of Capernaum. No city in Palestine appears to have enjoyed so much of our Lord's presence, during His earthly ministry, as did this city. It was the place where He dwelt, after He left Nazareth. (Matt. iv. 13.) It was the place where many of His miracles were worked, and many of His sermons delivered. But nothing that Jesus said or did seems to have had any effect on the hearts of the inhabitants. They crowded to hear Him, as we read in this passage, "till there was no room about the door." They were amazed. They were astonished. They were filled with wonder at His mighty works. But they were not converted. They lived in the full noon-tide blaze of the Sun of Righteousness, and yet their hearts remained hard. And they drew from our Lord the heaviest condemnation that He ever pronounced against any place, except Jerusalem: "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." (Matt. xi. 23, 24.)

It is good for us all to mark well this case of Capernaum. We are all too apt to suppose that it needs nothing but the powerful preaching of

the Gospel to convert people's souls, and that if the Gospel is only brought into a place everybody *must* believe. We forget the amazing power of unbelief, and the depth of man's enmity against God. We forget that the Capernaimites heard the most faultless preaching, and saw it confirmed by the most surprising miracles, and yet remained dead in trespasses and sins. We need reminding that the same Gospel which is the savour of life to some, is the savour of death to others, and that the same fire which softens the wax will also harden the clay. Nothing, in fact, seems to harden man's heart so much, as to hear the Gospel regularly, and yet deliberately prefer the service of sin and the world. Never was there a people so highly favoured as the people of Capernaum, and never was there a people who appear to have become so hard. Let us beware of walking in their steps. We ought often to use the prayer of the Litany, "From hardness of heart, Good Lord, deliver us."

We see, in the second place, from these verses, *how great a blessing affliction may prove to a man's soul.*

We are told that one sick of the palsy was brought to our Lord, at Capernaum, in order to be healed. Helpless and impotent, he was carried in his bed by four kind friends, and let down into the midst of the place where Jesus was preaching. At once the object of the man's desire was gained. The great Physician of soul and body saw him, and gave him speedy relief. He restored him to health and strength. He granted him the far greater blessing of forgiveness of sins. In short the man who had been carried from his house that morning weak, dependent, and bowed down both in body and soul, returned to his own house rejoicing.

Who can doubt that to the end of his days this man would thank God for this palsy? Without it he might probably have lived and died in ignorance, and never seen Christ at all. Without it, he might have kept his sheep on the green hills of Galilee all his life long, and never been brought to Christ, and never heard these blessed words "thy sins be forgiven thee." That palsy was indeed a blessing. Who can tell but it was the beginning of eternal life to his soul?

How many in every age can testify that this palsied man's experience has been their own! They have learned wisdom by affliction. Bereavements have proved mercies. Losses have proved real gains. Sickneses have led them to the great Physician of souls, sent them to the Bible, shut out the world, shown them their own foolishness, taught them to pray. Thousands can say like David, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." (Psal. cxix. 71.)

Let us beware of murmuring under affliction. We may be sure there is a needs-be for every cross, and a wise reason for every trial. Every sickness and sorrow is a gracious message from God, and is meant to call us

nearer to Him. Let us pray that we may learn the lesson that each affliction is appointed to convey. Let us see that we “refuse not Him that speaketh.”

We see, in the last place, in these verses, *the priestly power of forgiving sins, which is possessed by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We read that our Lord said to the sick of the palsy, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” He said these words with a meaning. He knew the hearts of the Scribes by whom He was surrounded. He intended to show them that He laid claim to be the true High Priest, and to have the power of absolving sinners, though at present the claim was seldom put forward. But that He had the power He told them expressly. He says, “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.” In saying “thy sins be forgiven thee,” He had only exercised His rightful office.

Let us consider how great must be the authority of Him, who has the power to forgive sins! This is the thing that none can do but God. No angel in heaven, no man upon earth, no church in council, no minister of any denomination, can take away from the sinner’s conscience the load of guilt, and give him peace with God. They may point to the fountain open for all sin. They may declare with authority whose sins God is willing to forgive. But they cannot absolve by their own authority. They cannot put away transgressions. This is the peculiar prerogative of God, and a prerogative which He has put in the hands of His Son Jesus Christ.

Let us think for a moment how great a blessing it is, that Jesus is our great High Priest, and that we know where to go for absolution! We must have a Priest and a sacrifice between ourselves and God. Conscience demands an atonement for our many sins. God’s holiness makes it absolutely needful. Without an atoning Priest there can be no peace of soul. Jesus Christ is the very Priest that we need, mighty to forgive and pardon, tender-hearted and willing to save.

And now let us ask ourselves whether we have yet known the Lord Jesus as our High Priest? Have we applied to Him? Have we sought absolution? If not, we are yet in our sins. May we never rest till the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we have sat at the feet of Jesus and heard his voice, saying, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”

MARK II. 13–22.

13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many Publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

16 And when the Scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with Publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with Publicans and sinners?

17 When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

18 And the disciples of John and of the

Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

THE person who is called Levi, at the beginning of this passage, is the same person who is called Matthew in the first of the four Gospels. Let us not forget this. It is no less than an apostle and an evangelist, whose early history is now before our eyes.

We learn from these verses, *the power of Christ to call men out from the world, and make them His disciples*. We read that he said to Levi, when “sitting at the receipt of custom, Follow me.” And at once “he arose and followed him.” From a publican he became an apostle, and a writer of the first book in that New Testament, which is now known all over the world.

This is a truth of deep importance. Without a divine call no one can be saved. We are all so sunk in sin, and so wedded to the world, that we should never turn to God and seek salvation, unless He first called us by His grace. God must speak to our hearts by His Spirit, before we shall ever speak to Him. Those who are sons of God, says the 17th Article, are “called according to God’s purpose by His Spirit working in due season.” Now how blessed is the thought that this calling of sinners is committed to so gracious a Saviour as Christ!

When the Lord Jesus calls a sinner to be His servant, He acts as a Sovereign; but He acts with infinite mercy. He often chooses those who seem most unlikely to do His will, and furthest off from His kingdom. He draws them to Himself with almighty power, breaks the chains of old habits and customs, and makes them new creatures. As the loadstone

attracts the iron, and the southwind softens the frozen ground, so does Christ's calling draw sinners out from the world, and melt the hardest heart. "The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation." Blessed are they, who, when they hear it, harden not their hearts!

We ought never to despair entirely of anyone's salvation, when we read this passage of Scripture. He who called Levi, still lives and still works. The age of miracles is not yet past. The love of money is a powerful principle, but the call of Christ is more powerful. Let us not despair even about those who "sit at the receipt of custom," and enjoy abundance of this world's good things. The voice which said to Levi, "Follow me," may yet reach their hearts. We may yet see them arise, and take up the cross, and follow Christ. Let us hope continually, and pray for others. Who can tell what God may be going to do for anyone around us? No one is too bad for Christ to call. Let us pray for all.

We learn, for another thing, from these verses, that *one of Christ's principal offices is that of a Physician*. The Scribes and Pharisees found fault with Him for eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. But "when Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick."

The Lord Jesus did not come into the world, as some suppose, to be nothing more than a law-giver, a king, a teacher, and an example. Had this been all the purpose of His coming, there would have been small comfort for man. Diet-tables and rules of living are all very well for the convalescent, but not suitable to the man labouring under a mortal disease. A teacher and an example might be sufficient for an unfallen being like Adam in the garden of Eden. But fallen sinners like ourselves want healing first, before we can value rules.

The Lord Jesus came into the world to be a physician as well as a teacher. He knew the necessities of human nature. He saw us all sick of a mortal disease, stricken with the plague of sin, and dying daily. He pitied us, and came down to bring divine medicine for our relief. He came to give health and cure to the dying, to heal the broken hearted, and to offer strength to the weak. No sin-sick soul is too far gone for Him. It is His glory to heal and restore to life the most desperate cases. For unfailing skill, for unwearied tenderness, for long experience of man's spiritual ailments, the great Physician of souls stands alone. There is none like Him.

But what do we know ourselves of this special office of Christ? Have we ever felt our spiritual sickness and applied to Him for relief? We are never right in the sight of God until we do. We know nothing aright in religion, if we think the sense of sin should keep us back from Christ. To feel our sins, and know our sickness is the beginning of real Christianity.

To be sensible of our corruption and abhor our own transgressions, is the first symptom of spiritual health. Happy indeed are they who have found out their soul's disease! Let them know that Christ is the very Physician they require, and let them apply to Him without delay.

We learn, in the last place, from these verses, that *in religion it is worse than useless to attempt to mix things which essentially differ*. "No man," He tells the Pharisees, "seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment." "No man putteth new wine into old bottles."

These words, we must of course see, were a parable. They were spoken with a special reference to the question which the Pharisees had just raised: "Why do the disciples of John fast, but thy disciples fast not?" Our Lord's reply evidently means, that to enforce fasting among His disciples would be inexpedient and unseasonable. His little flock was as yet young in grace, and weak in faith, knowledge, and experience. They must be led on softly, and not burdened at this early stage with requirements which they were not able to bear. Fasting, moreover, might be suitable to the disciples of Him who was only the Bridegroom's friend, who lived in the wilderness, preached the baptism of repentance, was clothed in camel's hair, and ate locusts and wild honey. But fasting was not equally suitable to the disciples of Him, who was the Bridegroom Himself, brought glad tidings to sinners, and came living like other men. In short, to require fasting of His disciples at present, would be putting "new wine into old bottles." It would be trying to mingle and amalgamate things that essentially differed.

The principle laid down in these little parables is one of great importance. It is a kind of proverbial saying, and admits of a wide application. Forgetfulness of it has frequently done great harm in the Church. The evils that have arisen from trying to sew the new patch on the old garment, and put the new wine into old bottles, have neither been few nor small.

How was it with the Galatian Church? It is recorded in St. Paul's epistle. Men wished in that Church to reconcile Judaism with Christianity, and to circumcise as well as baptize. They endeavoured to keep alive the law of ceremonies and ordinances, and to place it side by side with the Gospel of Christ. In fact they would fain have put the "new wine into old bottles." And in so doing they greatly erred.

How was it with the early Christian Church, after the apostles were dead? We have it recorded in the pages of Church history. Some tried to make the Gospel more acceptable by mingling it with Platonic philosophy. Some laboured to recommend it to the heathen by borrowing forms, processions, and vestments from the temples of heathen gods. In short, they "sewed the new patch on the old garment." And in so doing they

scattered broadcast the seeds of enormous evil. They paved the way for the whole Romish apostasy.

How is it with many professing Christians in the present day? We have only to look around us and see. There are thousands who are trying to reconcile the service of Christ and the service of the world, to have the name of Christian and yet live the life of the ungodly,—to keep in with the servants of pleasure and sin, and yet be the followers of the crucified Jesus at the same time. In a word, they are trying to enjoy the “new wine,” and yet to cling to the “old bottles.” They will find one day that they have attempted that which cannot be done.

Let us leave the passage in a spirit of serious self- inquiry. It is one that ought to raise great searchings of heart in the present day. Have we never read what the Scripture says? “No man can serve two masters.” “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Let us place side by side with these texts the concluding words of our Lord in this passage, “New wine must be put into new bottles.”¹

¹ It must always be remembered that the “bottle” here spoken of was not a bottle of glass or of earthenware, but of leather. Unless this is kept in view, the parable is unintelligible to an English mind. A similar remark applies to David’s words, “I am become like a bottle in the smoke.” (Psal. cxix. 83.)

MARK II 23–28.

23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him?

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the High Priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the Priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

THESE verses set before us a remarkable scene in our Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. We see our blessed Master and His disciples going through the corn fields on the Sabbath day." We are told that His disciples, as they went, began to pluck the ears of corn." At once we hear the Pharisees accusing them to our Lord, as if they had committed some great moral offence. "Why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?" They received an answer full of deep wisdom, which all should study well, who desire to understand the subject of Sabbath observance.

We see from these verses, *what extravagant importance is attached to trifles by those who are mere formalists in religion.*

The Pharisees were mere formalists, if there ever were any in the world. They seem to have thought exclusively of the outward part, the husk, the shell, and the ceremonial of religion. They even added to these externals by traditions of their own. Their godliness was made up of washings, and fastings, and peculiarities in dress, and will-worship, while repentance, and faith, and holiness were comparatively overlooked.

The Pharisees would probably have found no fault, if the disciples had been guilty of some offence against the moral law. They would have winked at covetousness, or perjury, or extortions, or excess, because they were sins to which they themselves were inclined. But no sooner did they see an infringement of their man-made traditions about the right way of keeping the Sabbath, than they raised an outcry, and found fault.

Let us watch and pray, lest we fall into the error of the Pharisees. There are never wanting Christians who walk in their steps. There are thousands at the present day who plainly think more of the mere outward ceremonial of religion than of its doctrines. They make more ado about keeping saints' days, and turning to the east in the creed, and bowing at the name of Jesus, than about repentance, or faith, or separation from the world. Against this spirit let us ever be on our guard. It can neither comfort, satisfy, nor save.

It ought to be a settled principle in our minds, that a man's soul is in a

bad state, when he begins to regard man-made rites and ceremonies, as things of superior importance, and exalts them above the preaching of the Gospel. It is a symptom of spiritual disease. There is mischief within. It is too often the resource of an uneasy conscience. The first steps of apostasy from Protestantism to Romanism have often been in this direction. No wonder that St. Paul said to the Galatians, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain.” (Gal. iv. 10, 11.)

We see, in the second place, from these verses, *the value of a knowledge of Holy Scripture.*

Our Lord replies to the accusation of the Pharisees by a reference to Holy Scripture. He reminds His enemies of the conduct of David, when “he had need and was an hungred.” “Have ye never read what David did?” They could not deny that the writer of the book of Psalms, and the man after God’s own heart, was not likely to set a bad example. They knew in fact that he had not turned aside from God’s commandment, all the days of his life, “save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” (1 Kings xv. 5.) Yet what had David done? He had gone into the house of God, when pressed by hunger, and eaten “the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests.”² “He had thus shown that some require-

² “There is some difficulty in this passage in the mention of Abiathar as “the High Priest.” In the book of Samuel it appears that Abimelech was the High Priest, when the circumstance here referred to took place. (1 Sam. xxi. 6.)

The explanations of this difficulty are various. They are as follows:—

1. Beza says that both Abiathar and Abimelech had each two names, and that Abiathar was frequently called Abimelech, and Abimelech Abiathar. (See in proof of this, 2 Sam. viii. 17: 1 Chron. viii. 16, and xxiv. 3.)

2. Lightfoot would translate the words, “in the days of Abiathar, the son of the High Priest,” and says he is named rather than his father because he brought the Ephod to David, and by him inquiry was made by Urim and Thummim. He also says, that the Jews by “Abiathar” understood the Urim and Thummim, and to say that the thing was done “under Abiathar” would show that it was done by divine direction.

3. Whitby thinks that by “the High Priest” here, we are not to understand him who was strictly so called, but only one who was an eminent man of the order. He quotes as examples, Matt. ii. 4: xxvi. 3: xxvii. 62: John xi. 47: Mark xiv. 10, 43.

4. Some think that both Abimelech and Abiathar officiated as High Priests at the same time. That there was nothing altogether unusual in there being two Chief Priests at once, is shown by 1 Sam. viii. 17, where two names are given as “the Priests.”

5. Some think that there has been a mistake made in transcribing the original words of St. Mark in this place, and some words have been inserted, or wrongly written. Beza’s manuscript omits the words translated, “in the time of Abiathar the High Priest,” altogether. The St. Gall manuscript and the Gothic version have the word “Priest” simply; and not “High Priest.” The Persian version has “Abimelech “instead of “Abiathar.” However, it is only fair to say that the evidence of the great majority of manuscripts and versions is in favour of the text as it stands.

Some of these solutions of the difficulty are evidently more probable than others. But any one of them is far more reasonable and deserving of belief than to suppose, as some have asserted, that St. Mark made a blunder! Such a theory destroys the whole principle of the inspiration of Scripture. Transcribers of the Bible have possibly made

ments of God's laws might be relaxed in case of necessity. To this Scripture example our Lord refers His adversaries. They found nothing to reply to it. The sword of the Spirit was a weapon which they could not resist. They were silenced, and put to shame.

Now the conduct of our Lord on this occasion ought to be a pattern to all His people. Our grand reason for our faith, and practice, should always be, "Thus it is written in the Bible." "What saith the Scripture?" We should endeavour to have the word of God on our side in all debateable questions. We should seek to be able to give a scriptural answer for our behaviour in all matters of dispute. We should refer our enemies to the Bible as our rule of conduct. We shall always find a plain text the most powerful argument we can use. In a world like this we must expect our opinions to be attacked, if we serve Christ, and we may be sure that nothing silences adversaries so soon as a quotation from Scripture.

Let us however remember, that if we are to use the Bible as our Lord did, we must know it well, and be acquainted with its contents. We must read it diligently, humbly, perseveringly, prayerfully, or we shall never find its texts coming to our aid in the time of need. To use the sword of the Spirit effectually, we must be familiar with it, and have it often in our hands. There is no royal road to the knowledge of the Bible. It does not come to man by intuition. The book must be studied, pondered, prayed over, searched into, and not left always lying on a shelf, or carelessly looked at now and then. It is the students of the Bible, and they only, who will find it a weapon ready to hand in the day of battle.

We see, in the last place, from these verses, the *true principle by which all questions about the observance of the Sabbath ought to be decided*. "The Sabbath," says our Lord, "was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

There is a mine of deep wisdom in those words. They deserve close attention, and the more so because they are not recorded in any Gospel but that of St. Mark. Let us see what they contain.

"The Sabbath was made for man." God made it for Adam in Paradise, and renewed it to Israel on Mount Sinai. It was made for all mankind, not for the Jew only, but for the whole family of Adam. It was made for man's benefit and happiness. It was for the good of his body, the good of his mind, and the good of his soul. It was given to him as a boon and a blessing, and not as a burden. This was the original institution.

But "man was not made for the Sabbath." The observance of the day of God was never meant to be so enforced as to be an injury to his

occasional mistakes. The original writers were inspired in the writing of every word, and therefore could not err.

health, or to interfere with his necessary wants. The original command to “keep holy the Sabbath Day,” was not intended to be so interpreted as to do harm to his body, or prevent acts of mercy to his fellow-creatures. This was the point that the Pharisees had forgotten, or buried under their traditions.

There is nothing in all this to warrant the rash assertion of some, that our Lord has done away with the fourth commandment. On the contrary, He manifestly speaks of the Sabbath Day as a privilege and a gift, and only regulates the extent to which its observance should be enforced. He shows that works of necessity and mercy may be done on the Sabbath Day; but He says not a word to justify the notion that Christians need not remember the day to keep it holy.”

Let us be jealous over our own conduct in the matter of observing the Sabbath. There is little danger of the day being kept too strictly in the present age. There is far more danger of its being profaned and forgotten entirely. Let us contend earnestly for its preservation among us in all its integrity. We may rest assured that national prosperity and personal growth in grace, are intimately bound up in the maintenance of a holy Sabbath.³

³ The concluding words of the passage now expounded are remarkable. “The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” They have received some rather strange interpretations, which it may be well to notice,

1. Chrysostom, Grotius, Calovius, and others, think that the “son of man” in this place means “any man,” any one naturally born of the family of Adam, and not Christ Himself. To say nothing of the objections that might be brought against the doctrines involved in such a sense, it is an unanswerable objection that the expression “son of man” is never used in this way in the New Testament. Whitby says that it occurs eighty-eight times, and always applies to Christ.

2. Others say that our Lord’s meaning is, to assert His own right to dispense with the observance of the fourth commandment. This however seems a very unsatisfactory interpretation. Our Lord declares plainly in one place, that He came “not to destroy the law but to fulfil.” He challenges the Jews in another place to convict Him of any breach of the law: “which of you convinceth me of sin?” His enemies, when they brought Him at last before Caiaphas, did not charge Him with breaking the fourth commandment. No doubt they would have done so, had He given them occasion, either by His teaching or practice.

The true meaning appears to be, that our Lord claims the right to dispense with all the traditional rules, and man-made laws about the Sabbath, with which the Pharisees had overloaded the day of rest. As Son of man, who came not to destroy but to save, He asserts His power to set free the blessed Sabbath from the false and superstitious notions with which the Rabbins had clogged and poisoned it, and to restore it to its proper meaning and use. He declares that the Sabbath is His day,—His by creation and institution, since He first gave it in Paradise and at Sinai,—and proclaims His determination to defend and purify His day from Jewish imposition, and to give it to His disciples as a day of blessing, comfort, and benefit, according to its original intention.

Two things are implied in our Lord’s words. One is His own divinity. The “Lord of the Sabbath day” could be no less than God Himself. It is like the expression, “In this

place is one greater than the temple.” (Matt. xii. 6.) The other is His intention of altering the day of rest from the seventh day of the week to the first. At the time that He spoke, neither of these things doubtless were apparent to the Jews, and probably not to His disciples. After His ascension they “would remember his words.”

A passage in Mayer’s Commentary is worth reading . “It is certain that Christ being a perfect pattern of doctrine in all things, did not transgress, or maintain any transgression against any law of God. Wherefore it is to be held that all His speech here tendeth to nothing else but to convince the Pharisees of blindness and ignorance, touching the right keeping of the Sabbath according to the commandment, it being never required to rest so strictly as they thought.”—*Mayer’s Commentary*. 1631.