

Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-28

November 4, 2012

Introduction

Many religions in the world have sacred places: Hindus have Ganges River; Muslims have Mecca; the Jews have Jerusalem and the temple. However, what makes Judaism unique among world religion is that they venerate (even above Jerusalem and the temple) time. Every week on Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, they stop all labor and rest. It became a literal hill where they would die on.

Sabbath as an issue comes up often between Jesus and the religious leaders. Jesus has great disdain for the man-made traditions that are added to what Scripture teaches.

Matthew 15:3 *He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"*

He often provokes the Pharisees—not in malice, but to show them how their views are hellishly wrong, and He calls them to repent from their ways. Sadly, every time Jesus does this, the religious leaders are increasingly inflamed to the point of killing Him.

The first Sabbath conflict record in Scripture happens in **John 5** when Jesus is in Jerusalem during a feast (which John does not name). This was early in Jesus' ministry. By the Bethesda pool, Jesus heals a man who was paralyzed for 38 years. John the apostle observes that is on Sabbath (**verse 9**). Jesus After Jesus heals the man, He commands the man to take up his bed and walk. His command is no accident because He knows that the religious leaders would see the man carrying the bed. Of course, not long after, as the healed man walks through the crowd, he is spotted and stopped by the Jews (religious leaders as John calls them). Despite the fact that this man has been paralyzed for 38 years and now walking, they are more interested in why he is carrying the bed. The man does not know Jesus' name, so he tells them that a man had healed him and commanded him to walk. Later, Jesus finds the man and talks with him. After that, the man tells the Jews who had healed him. This is their reaction:

John 5:16 *So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted Him.*

"[T]hese things" are the reason that the Jews persecuted Him. In other words, it is because not only He commanded the man to take up the mat and walk but also that He heals the man on Sabbath. In their eyes, it is a gross violation of Sabbath law. The Jews have no room for mercy or justice in their laws.

Mark records two Sabbath conflicts that lead the Jews to plot to kill Jesus. They do not know nor care about the Lord of the Sabbath explaining the true meaning of Sabbath.

Mark 2:23-28 *One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as His disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴The Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." ²⁷Then He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

I. The Sabbath

- Meaning: to cease from activities
- Sabbath law in the OT

Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

- Keep it holy
- Not to do work—your regular job (very broad statement)
- These are the only restrictions
- Man-made laws
 - Most of the laws that we know are from the Talmud (put together in AD 500)
 - The Talmud picks up and codifies all the laws that have long existed in Judaism
 - Talmud contains 24 chapters on the Sabbath alone on what to do or not to do
 - Walking
 - Cannot go more than 3,000 feet (or 1,999 steps)
 - To go further than that -- put some food 1,999 steps away on Friday before Sabbath and once you got to the food, another 1,999 steps added
 - If narrow streets—lay a piece of wood or a piece of rope over the entrance to the street between the dwellings on each side and you could make the street like the entrance to a house so you could go another 3,000 feet or 1,999 steps
 - Burden (Picking up or laying down something)
 - Cannot weigh more than a dried fig (which doesn't weigh very much)
 - you could lift something up and put something down, but only from certain places to certain places
 - You could lift it up in a public place and put it down in a private place
 - You cannot throw an object in air and catch it with other hand
 - You can throw an object in air and catch it with same hand
 - A tailor couldn't carry his needle
 - The scribe couldn't carry his pen
 - A pupil couldn't carry his books
 - Categories of Work that was forbidden
 - Planting
 - Plowing
 - Reaping
 - Gathering
 - Threshing/Extraction
 - Winnowing
 - Sifting
 - Beating/Combing wool
 - Dyeing
 - Making two loops
 - Separating two threads
 - Tying

- Untying
- Sewing
- Tearing
- Trapping
- Writing
- Extinguishing a fire
 - Even if the property was coming down around you (and if you're safe) is prohibited to extinguish a fire
- Igniting a fire
 - No fire could be lit
- Strange Sabbath laws
 - you put an olive in your mouth and rejected it because it was bad, you cannot put a whole one in the next time because you had tasted the flavor of a whole olive
 - No clothing could be examined lest somehow you find a lice and inadvertently kill it
 - You could not bathe because water might spill on floor and wash it
 - Chairs cannot be moved because they might make a rut
 - Women cannot look in a mirror or they might find a white hair and be tempted to pull it out.
 - Women cannot wear jewelry because jewelry weighs more than a dried fig.
 - A radish cannot be left in salt because it would turn into a pickle
 - You could use only enough ink for two alphabetic letters

Note: This was an oppressive burden for people because they had to worry about each little thing that was forbidden.

Matthew 11:28 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

II. Jesus Broke the Sabbath? (23-24)

- Going through grain fields
 - Paths would go through the wheat or barley fields...sometimes grain would grow on the paths!
- Pick heads of grain
 - Late March / early April (when grains were ripe)
 - Pick up grain and eating them

Deuteronomy 23:24-25 *If you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. ²⁵If you enter your neighbor's grain field, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain.*

Note: If you were hungry, then everything in Israel was free to eat. This is what the disciples were doing.

Note: The Pharisees were probably walking more than 1,999 feet to follow Jesus! They were hounding Him every step of the way.

- Unlawful practices

Luke 6:1 *One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grain fields, and His disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels.*

- Rolling grain in hand to remove shell = sifting (forbidden)
- Rub heads of grain = threshing (forbidden)
- Throw chaff in air = winnowing (forbidden)
- Just to eat wheat!

III. Lord of the Sabbath (25-28)

- David and Abiathar
 - Have you never read
 - A scathing indictment
 - They have read it but they have no understanding
 - 1 Samuel 21
 - David flees south because Saul wants to kill him
 - Nob—where the tabernacle is (near Jerusalem)
 - David is hungry and asks Ahimelech (Abiathar's father)
 - Priest gives David holy bread
 - This was forbidden by God

Leviticus 24:5-9 *Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. ⁶Set them in two rows, six in each row, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. ⁷Along each row put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be an offering made to the LORD by fire. ⁸This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. ⁹It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.*

- Only the priests could eat this bread
- Why did the priest give it to David
- There was need—he was hungry
- How is this related to the Sabbath issue?
 - If David was not punished for his eating the showbread because it was used to satisfy his hunger, then how about the disciples who ate grain because they were hungry on the Sabbath?
 - Necessity overrules rituals
- Sabbath made for man
 - Rest, blessing and joy
 - Meeting man's needs for rest instead of 7 days of continuous labor
- Son of Man Lord of Sabbath
 - Jesus has the right to interpret the law because He is the Word of God
 - He knows the spirit and intent of the Law of God
 - What the disciples were doing were no violation of the law of God
 - The hyper-legalistic rules the religious leaders made became a burden to the people