

The Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1~5)

The only way to truly understand and appreciate this passage, is to understand the Sabbath day...

The term **Sabbath**, carries the basic meaning of *ceasing, rest, and inactivity*... At the end of creation “*God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made*” (Gen. 2:3). In honor of that day the Lord declared it to be a special time of rest and remembrance for His people and incorporated its observance into the requirements of the Ten Commandments.

(Exodus 20) ⁸*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: ¹⁰But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

From that day forward, the newly formed nation of Israel would set aside the last day of the week, to be a day of rest from their labors, in honor of God, who rested from His labor on the seventh day. The observance of the Sabbath day was at the heart of Hebrew/Jewish faith, in that served as an ever-present testimony to the creation account given to Moses from God. No other nation observed such a day, only the nation Israel. Thus, the observation of the Sabbath day, every week, was a witness of their faith in the God of Moses, and the creation account given to him from God. If anyone should ask, as to why they rested from their labor every seven days, their answer would be a testimony of the one true, living God.

When you stop and consider the creation account, and how the Lord rested from all his labors of the seventh day, it's interesting to think of the impact the scripture has had on our world, simply by our calendar. Our calendar is broken down into weeks, weeks, which consist of seven days. Think about that, weeks could have been defined as five, six days, or eight, nine, whatever, but there not, they are made up of seven days. The first day being on Sunday, and the last day on Saturday, which coincides with the Sabbath day. Thus we see, that the world's calendar has been fashioned after the biblical account of creation. (*Note, don't tell anyone about this, because if word gets out, they'll be trying to get our calendar changed...ha, ha*) Hey, I've got an idea, since atheist don't believe in God, I think they should work all the time, never take a day off...kind of a “*living protest*” against our God.

At the heart of the observance of Sabbath day, was that they were to rest from their labors. There was to be “*no work*” done on this day. Which sounds simple enough, but it would prove to be anything but simple. The problem became, “*What defines work?*” Where do you draw the line as to what is considered work and what is not. As you can easily imagine, there quickly became arguments as to what actually constituted “*work*,” with disagreements as what you could and couldn't do.

This is something that we as Christians, struggle with today... Even though as Christians, we do not observe the Sabbath anymore (*I'm speaking of the original Sabbath, on Saturday*), we do still pay homage to the premises behind Sabbath that of a day set aside for rest, a day set aside to worship the Lord. The main difference is we no longer do it on Saturday, but Sunday. (*I'll explain why the change later...*)

My point for now is, that even though we don't observe the Sabbath, in its original meaning, we still pay homage to the premises of Sabbath, by making it a day of rest and worship. And for centuries, there's been the debate among Christians as to what we should and shouldn't do on the Lord's Day. It depends on who you ask as to *what is considered acceptable*. To this day, many will do no form of manual labor; there are some who will not mow their yards, wash cars, clean up the house, etc. It wasn't too long ago,

that the women would prepare their meals for Sunday on Saturday, so they wouldn't violate their consciences on Sunday by having to cook. My intent this morning is not to define what one should and shouldn't do on Sundays. But I do want to say; that I'm becoming more and more concerned with what this day is being turned into, specifically that of like every other day. Short of sounding like one of these Pharisees, a legalist, I want to remind us that Sunday is the Lord's day, a day that should be held in high regards, and held in honor. I will not define for you this morning what you should or shouldn't do on this day, but I will say, that whatever you do or don't do, should be to the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!

At the heart of the observance of Sabbath day, was that they were to rest from their labors. There was to be "*no work*" done on this day. Again, that sounds simple enough, but it would prove to be anything but simple. The problem became, "*What defines work?*" Where do you draw the line as to what is considered work and what is not. As a result of the un surety, and given that the Pharisee's and Scribes were the ones who taught and enforced the Law, they took upon themselves the task of definitively defining what was considered work and what was deemed acceptable.

One law specified that the basic limit for travel was 3,000 feet from one's house; but various exceptions were provided. If you had placed some food within 3,000 feet of your house, you could go there to eat it; and because the food was considered an extension of the house, you could then go another 3,000 feet beyond the food.

Under Sabbath regulations, a Jew could not carry a load heavier than a dried fig; but if an object weighed half that amount he could carry it twice. Eating restrictions were among the most detailed and extensive. You could eat nothing larger than an olive; and even if you tasted half an olive, found it to be rotten and spit it out, that half was considered to have been eaten as far as the allowance was concerned.

Throwing an object into the air with one hand and catching it with the other was prohibited. If the Sabbath overtook you as you reached for some food, the food was to be dropped before drawing your arm back, lest you be guilty of carrying a burden.

Tailors did not carry a needle with them on the Sabbath for fear they might be tempted to mend a garment and thereby perform work. Nothing could be bought or sold, and clothing could not be dyed or washed. A letter could not be dispatched, even if by the hand of a Gentile. No fire could be lit or extinguished—including fire for a lamp—although a fire already lit could be used within certain limits. For that reason, some orthodox Jews today use automatic timers to turn on lights in their homes well before the Sabbath begins. Otherwise they might forget to turn them on in time and have to spend the night in the dark.

Baths could not be taken for fear some of the water might spill onto the floor and "wash" it. Chairs could not be moved because dragging them might make a furrow in the ground, and a woman was not to look in a mirror lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out. You could carry ink enough to draw only two letters of the alphabet, and false teeth could not be worn because they exceeded the weight limit for burdens.

According to those hair-splitting regulations, If a person became ill on the Sabbath, only enough treatment could be given to keep him alive. Treatment to make him improve was declared to be work, and therefore forbidden. Among the many other forbidden Sabbath activities were: sewing, plowing, reaping, grinding, baking, threshing, binding sheaves, winnowing, sifting, dying, shearing, spinning, kneading, separating or weaving two threads, tying or untying a knot, and sewing two stitches.

Regulation after regulation, had all but destroyed the intent of Sabbath observance. Instead of being a day of rest it had become a day of incredible burden. Because of the thousands of man-made restrictions regarding it, the Sabbath was more tiresome than the six days devoted to one's occupation. It was harder to "rest" than to earn a living. The Sabbath was anything but a time of rest. It had become a time of oppressive frustration and anxiety. The people were sick to death of this system that had been imposed on them by ungodly, worldly legalists, and they were indeed "*weary and heavy-laden*" Matt. 11:28.

Though we have only scratched the surface of the regulations concerning the Sabbath... One section alone of the Talmud, the major compilation of Jewish tradition, has twenty-four chapters listing Sabbath laws. This small sample helps us in understanding the situation here in this passage. We are told that Jesus and his disciples were walking through the fields of grain on a Sabbath day, and they began to pull the heads of grain off and eat them. As a result, the Pharisees condemned the action and accused Jesus and his disciples of "*transgressing the Law!*" Now, it's important to understand, the offense they were being accused of. It was not the fact they were "*eating,*" for eating was not forbidden. Nor was it because they were taking from the fields, being accused of stealing. For in His Law, God required farmers to leave

roughly 10 % of their crops un-harvested, (usually the outside edges) for the poor and the hungry. So, they were not breaking the Law by eating the grain, because they ate out of hunger.

The charge of “*doing that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days*” is stated here in verse 1...

¹*And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, **rubbing them in their hands.***

The fact that they “**rubbed**” the wheat in their hands, separating the wheat from the chaff, the legalistic Pharisees accused them of “*harvesting on the Sabbath*” Rabbinic tradition, had *ridiculously interpreted the rubbing of grain together in the hands* as a form of threshing; and they regarded blowing away the chaff as a form of winnowing. **The Talmud said**, “*If a person rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is sifting. If he rubs the heads of wheat, it is threshing. If he cleans off the side adherences, it is sifting. If he bruises the ears, it is grinding. And if he throws it up in his hand, it is winnowing.*”

In response to the charge...Jesus said...³*Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him;*⁴*How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; **which it is not lawful** to eat but for the priests alone?*⁵*And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*

Jesus reminds the Pharisees of the time when King David had broken the law by eating the showbread, which Levitical Law *clearly forbids* anyone other than the priest to do. The bread he is referring to here is the “*Showbread*,” the “*Bread of Presence*.” It refers to 12 loaves of bread that was placed on a table in the presence of the Lord, in the holy place. (*The 12 loaves were representative of the 12 tribes of Israel.*) Once a week, the priest would replace the bread with fresh baked bread, and the old bread was to be taken by the priest and eaten.

The event concerning David, that Jesus cited, is found in 1 Samuel 21. It speaks of the time when King Saul was pursuing David to kill him. Saul was Jealous of David, and sought to take his life. Saul’s son Jonathan, was good friends with David, and secretly warned David of his father’s intention to kill him, exhorting him to flee. The event here of David eating the bread took place while David was on the run. Tired and hungry, David enters the house of the Lord, and asked the priest Ahimelech, for something to eat. Ahimelech informed David that he had no common bread, but only the hallowed bread, the showbread. Which he goes on to give David some for he and his men, which was clearly against the law.

Jesus challenges their accusations against him and his disciples of doing that which is unlawful on the Sabbath, by reminding them of what King David had done. “³*Have ye not read so much as this, what David did,*” is kind of a slap in the face. Saying, “*I’m sure men of your caliber, men who know the scripture so well, remember what David did...right?*”

The point being...that David, their highly respected, highly favored King, clearly did what was deemed unlawful. Thus, if they were going to condemn him, would they condemn David as well? It is as if to say, “*Seeing that you condemn me, will you condemn King David as well, for what he did?* For that would be unjust... Notice, the point was well taken, because as you read on, we see they dropped the charges. We find them in verse 7, on another Sabbath trying to catch him again, doing something more sinister.

It’s important to understand why Jesus cited the account of David eating the showbread... He wasn’t trying to “justify” what they were accusing him of, by pointing to David. It was to serve as a teaching on the real purpose of the Law, and it’s relation to man. God’s law is for man’s benefit, not to burden him. The Pharisees had clearly taken the Laws concerning the Sabbath, which were intended to be a day of rest, and had turned it into a day of burden! What God had meant to be a blessing to man, these man had

turned into a burden for men. Rather than being a day they could look forward to each week, it became a day they dreaded.

God gave the law for the bread to be reserved for the priest alone, mainly to ensure their needs were met. He did the same with some of the meat from the animals sacrificed on the altar. These laws were designed to protect and provide for the priest, to ensure his needs were met. Paul understood this, in a couple of his letters, he makes the statement, *“Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox which treads out the corn.”* In other words, it wouldn't be right to make the ox tread out the corn, and not give him any. And the point was Paul was making was that the ministers of the gospel should be supported. The law of the showbread and the meat of the sacrifices were to ensure the needs of the priest were taken care of.

But here's the point in the story of David... Does that mean that the priest cannot give it away, as an act of mercy, to someone who is hungry? Did the Law forbid such acts of mercy and compassion? The point of the story of David eating the showbread was to show that God's Law contains the provision for mercy and grace. It was to teach that God is not so dogmatic about the letter of the law, that he is cold and indifferent to the needs of people. In other words, God was not so dogmatic about the law of the showbread, being for the priest only, that he would punish the priest for giving some to the hungry. If you wanted to get technical about it, and dot all the I's and cross the T's, both the priest and David broke the law. The priest broke it by giving it to David and his men, and David and his men broke it by eating it. But when you study that account, God never punished either. Reason being, God allows provision in His law for mercy and compassion. To correctly understand the passage, the priest would have actually done wrong by refusing David and his men the bread, for the simple fact that these men were hungry, and they came to the house of the Lord for help. If the priest had refused to bend from the Law, these men would have gone away hungry. The priest would have showed cold-heartedness towards these men.

In Matthew's account of this same event, Matthew records that Jesus quoted from Hosea 6:6 once again, just as he did in his teaching as to why he ate with publicans and sinners. *⁷But if ye had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*

That is to say, *“If you would have truly understood the teachings of the Law, if you were as wise in the “ways of God” as you think you are...you would not have condemned these men.* He was saying, *“You obviously don't understand the Law or the ways of God.” God desires mercy and not sacrifice...* God is not interested or impressed by the offerings of dead animals, the empty offerings of our hands. Those sacrificial offerings were established to teach the mercy and compassion God has towards sinners. It was the constant reminder of the forgiveness of sin by the offering up of life, by the shedding of blood. They didn't know it at the time, but each time they offered them, they were portraying the sacrificial offering up of the body of Christ.

They manifested they were clueless to the ways and Character of God, given the fact that they walked around condemning everyone over silly technicalities. Here these men were condemning Jesus and his disciples, and little did they know, he was the one who created the Sabbath.

(Vs 5) He is *the Lord of the Sabbath*... He is *“The Lord of Rest...”* Beloved, the reason we no longer observe the Sabbath (the original on Saturday) is because **Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath.**

The observance of *“Sabbath”* served as a constant picture of a coming day of rest. Each week, they would labor all week, anticipation the day of rest that was coming. A day in which there would be no work. It was a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to what he would accomplish on the cross. It pictured the time when the Law would be done away with, along with the *“WORKS”* thereof.

On Friday, when Jesus was crucified, 3 hours before Sabbath was to begin, Jesus cried, “*It is finished!*” The work is complete... The death of Jesus on the cross was the final work that Jesus came to accomplish during his visit to this world. They buried Jesus in a tomb, and the entire day of Sabbath, he rested, there was no work. But on the third day, Sunday morning, he got up!

That’s not to say that we have completely disregarded the “Sabbath” principle, for we have set aside the first day of the week, which is Sunday, as a day of rest and worship. This stems from the fact that was the day our Lord rose from the grave, which we now refer to as the Lord’s Day. From then until now, the church gathers on Sunday, what we refer to as the Lord’s Day, in honor of the Lord of the Sabbath. (*I’m convinced another important factor for changing the day, was to make a clean break from Judaism. Since the nation Israel rejected Jesus as a whole, I’m convinced the change was to sever ties with Judaism, in honor of the Lord Jesus.*)

Through the cross, Christ has removed the yoke of bondage, setting us free from the Law, ushering in the True Sabbath, the true day of rest... Through Christ, by Grace, we have entered into “REST.” (*Mt 11, Come unto me...*)