

The Sabbath & the Heart of God

Mark 2:23—3:6



The Pharisee's Guide to Total Holiness

- Matt. 23:23-24
- Mark 7:8-9, 13



An Outline

- I. The Sabbath: room for Necessity (2:23-28)
- II. The Sabbath: room for Mercy (3:1-6)
- Theme:
 - 2:28 – the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

I. The Sabbath: Room for Necessity (2:23-28)

- **A. The Question That Isn't a Question (23-24)**
 - 23a - And it happened that He was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath,
 - 1 ½ years into Jesus' ministry
 - Between Mark 2:22 and 23 several months pass.
 - John 5 records what happened.
 - Jesus went to Jerusalem for one of the annual feasts required of every male.
 - Either Passover or Pentecost (50 days later).
 - John 5:1-14 – Jesus heals a man at the pool of Bethesda, who had been sick for 38 years.
 - John 5:9 – now it was the Sabbath on that day.
 - [John 5:16-18](#)
 - After this confrontation, Jesus returns to Galilee.

Mark 2:23-28

- Timing
 - Late spring
 - Wheat harvest in May/June
 - The Sabbath
- 23b – and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.
 - Matthew adds, "and His disciples became hungry."
 - Luke 6:1 - Now it happened that He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain.
 - The OT law allowed someone passing by a field to take a little to assuage his hunger.
 - Deut. 23:25 - "When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain."
- 24 - The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

A Biblical Perspective on the Sabbath

- The Hebrew word
 - Shabbat
 - Most often refers to the 7th day
 - From a Hebrew word that means "to cease"
 - The day of ceasing—the day on which all work stops.
- Based on the week of creation (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; 31:17).
- Began at sundown on Friday and lasted through sundown on Saturday
- Sabbath keeping apparently preceded preceded the 10 commandments (Ex. 16:22-23, 25-26, 28-29).

A Biblical Perspective on the Sabbath

- 4th Command of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:8ff)
- Reasons for the Sabbath...
 - God's example at creation
 - Ex. 20:11 - 20:11 "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.
 - God's deliverance from Egypt
 - Cf. Deut. 5:15 - "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.
- Sign of Israel's loyalty to God...
 - Ex. 31:13 - "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.'
 - Ezek. 20:12 - "Also I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

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A Biblical Perspective on the Sabbath

- The Sabbath rules:
 - Observed by: animals, servants, guests, & members of the household (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15).
 - No labor or work.
 - No gathering of manna (Ex. 16)
 - No kindling of a fire (Ex 35:3)
 - No harvesting...
 - Ex. 34:21 - "You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.
 - Penalty for profaning the Sabbath: death
 - Ex. 31:14 - "Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.
 - E.g., Num 15:32-36
 - Day of worship with the people of God (Ex. 23:3) & welcome rest from normal labors (Deut 5:14-15).
 - To be a delight! (Is. 58:13)

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A Pharisaical Perspective on the Sabbath

- Mishnah: "The main classes of work: forty save one"
- The idea was...
 - a) don't work on the Sabbath in any way unless it is necessary to save a life;
 - b) don't start anything on Friday that would extend to the Sabbath.
- Reasonable prohibitions
 - e.g.: plowing, hunting, butchering, harvesting
- Unreasonable prohibitions
 - e.g.: tying or loosing knots, sewing more than one stitch, writing more than one letter, setting a dislocated limb, repairing a fallen roof
 - To pluck heads of grain = reaping
 - To rub out the grain = threshing
 - To blow away the chaff = winnowing

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I. The Sabbath: Room for Necessity (2:23-28)

- **A. The Question That Isn't a Question (23-24)**
- **B. The Answer That Can't be Answered (25-28)**

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Jesus' Arguments

- 1. From biblical history (25-26; Matt. 12:3-4; Luke 6:3-4)
 - **25-26** - And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?"
 - E.g., of David in **1 Sam. 21:1-6**
 - Argument: genuine necessity trumps strict adherence to the ceremonial law.

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Jesus' Arguments

- 2. From the Mosaic Law (Matt. 12:5)
 - Matt. 12:5 - "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?"
 - Argument: it's ok to work on the Sabbath in the case of God-ordained ministry.
 - The temple and its worship were greater than the Sabbath.
 - And Jesus and His ministry were greater than both temple and Sabbath.

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Jesus' Arguments

- 3. From the Prophets (Matt. 12:7)
 - Matt. 12:7 – "But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent.
 - Hosea 6:6
 - Argument: God's compassion for people is greater than the ceremonial law.

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Jesus' Arguments

- 4. From the purpose of the Sabbath (2:27)
 - 27 – Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.
 - Argument: God created the Sabbath as a blessing and benefit to man.

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Jesus' Arguments

- 5. From His own personal authority (28; Matt. 12:8; Luke 6:5)
 - 28 – "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
 - Lit., "So Lord is the Son of Man, even of the Sabbath."
 - Argument: I created the Sabbath—I have the right to define it and to determine how it should be kept.

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Application

- Jesus' use of Scripture underscores...
 - a) the importance of Scripture in deciding these kinds of issues
 - b) the necessity of reason and logic in comparing and applying Scripture



Application

- Jesus' quotation of Hosea 6:6 underscores the priority of compassion.
 - Not an excuse for direct disobedience of the ceremonial.
 - E.g., Num. 15:32-36 (man gathering wood).

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Application

- Christians are not bound by the regulations of either the OT Sabbath or "the Christian Sabbath."
- Two basic interpretations:
 - Sabbath hasn't changed at all = has to be Saturday
 - Sabbath has changed...
 - Day only—Christian Sabbath
 - Principle remains; specific restrictions no longer apply

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The Lord's Day

- Christians are to set aside time on the first day of week to worship.
- The early importance of Sunday:
 - 1) The resurrection of Christ (Matt. 28:1)
 - 2) Christ appeared 6x after His resurrection on Sunday.
 - 3) Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit were also on Sunday that year (50 days after Passover).
- Pattern of the early church:
 - Acts 20:7 – On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.
 - 1 Cor. 16:1-2 – Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.
 - Rev. 1:10 – I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound of a trumpet*,

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A Christian Sabbath?

- The Sabbath Command is the only one of the 10 Commandments not repeated and affirmed in the NT.
- Col. 2:16-17
 - OT use of those three expressions is without exception...
 - The annual feasts
 - The monthly new moon celebrations
 - The weekly Sabbaths
- An issue of conscience: Rom. 14.

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Application

- Jesus is equal with God.
 - To claim to be *Kurios* of the Sabbath was an unmistakable claim to deity.
 - Ex. 20:1, 18-19
 - Cf. Deut. 5:4, 22

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Application

- The Sabbath was a perfect picture of the spiritual rest our souls have found in Christ!
 - Heb. 4:1-11

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