

2025-08-03

Traditions About the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-3:6

Today on the Jewish calendar is the Ninth of Av. It is a day of fasting and mourning for the people of Israel as they remember the destruction of their temples. On this day in 586 B.C., after about a year and a half siege, the Babylonians penetrated the walls around Jerusalem and began the complete destruction and burning of the city, including Solomon's temple (Jeremiah 39:1-2 / 52:4-7). This is also the day that in A.D. 70 the Romans did the same thing. They breached the walls of Jerusalem on this day and burned the city and the 2nd Jewish temple to the ground. Twice, the complete **destruction of Jerusalem began on this date**. Why did God allow these to happen to His people in this city? There were probably many reasons, though one major reason was because the people were disobedient to God. The vast majority of the people were not faithfully following God as He called the people to follow Him. This is important to understand. Many people thought they were following God, just like in Jesus' day. The Pharisees and Sadducees and all their disciples thought they were following God correctly. The problem was, they were following their own made-up rules and their own idea of God, not the commands of God as revealed in scripture. This can be seen when looking at how people lived out the command to *"Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work"* (Deuteronomy 5:12-14).

Mark 2:23 *"Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain."* In many places in Israel, especially as you approached a town or city, the paths people walked bordered pastures and fields of grain. God allowed people who were hungry to pick enough grain to satisfy their hunger (Deuteronomy 23:25). They were even allowed to do this on the Sabbath. What Jesus and His disciples were doing was not wrong according to the scriptures. If anyone knew the law and kept the law, Jesus did. He allowed His disciples to satisfy their hunger as they walked into town on this Sabbath to attend the synagogue. God made meeting some human needs very important.

Verse 24 *"And the Pharisees said to Him, 'Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?'"* The problem was that over hundreds of years the religious leaders developed traditions that became the new laws everyone was required to follow. The Old Testament law only prohibited people from working to make a profit on the Sabbath. People were to do no regular work. As the disciples of Jesus were walking to the synagogue, some Pharisees, who probably should have been in the synagogue

for worship were openly watching everything Jesus and His disciples were doing. They were trying to catch Jesus and His disciples doing something wrong. Jesus knew this. He did not try to hide any behaviors. The Pharisees thought they had Jesus on this one. They went directly to Him to complain about His disciples and to explain their laws to Him and how His disciples were breaking their laws.

Verses 25-26 *“But He said to them, ‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him; how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?’”* Jesus is being sarcastic here. *“Have you never read?”* Of course, the Pharisees have read this event. They knew all the details. Their problem was that **they were ignorant of what the event was meant to teach them**. We find this story in 1 Samuel 21. David is running away from Saul because Saul is trying to kill him. David actually met with the priest Ahimelech in Nob. This was where the Tabernacle was for a time. The phrase, *“in the days of Abiathar the high priest”* is meant to refer to a time period like the Victorian Age or the Elizabethan Age, not to point out who was the high priest. David and his men were hungry. They asked the priest Ahimelech for some food. **There was no food in the town at all** except for the 12 loaves of bread that were in the Tabernacle. Only the priests were supposed to eat this bread (Leviticus 24:5-9). But the priest knowing it was the Sabbath, also knew that 12 fresh loaves of bread were just put out on the table in the Tabernacle. He had 12 loaves of this one-week-old bread. He decided to let David and his men have some of this bread. God was not upset by this. God was more concerned that David and his men not starve. Since God was not upset with David and his men who ate holy bread, God would not be upset with the disciples of Jesus eating the grain they picked on a Sabbath. Both were done because the people were hungry. For God, meeting this basic human need is very important.

Verse 27 *“And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.’”* Jesus now gave these Pharisees a lesson on why God made a day of rest. That is what the Sabbath is. God set the example. When God created everything, He worked six days and He rested on the Sabbath, not that God needed to rest (John 5:17). He was setting an example He wanted us to follow. Lots of cultures in the past worked 7 days a week. They were trusting in their own abilities to provide for themselves. God wanted His people to be different. **He wanted His people to trust Him and rest one day**. This was different. This was good. It gave the people time to worship God and show Him thanks for His blessings. It taught the people to trust God and to rest. Now we work 5 days a week and have 2 days off. Those 2 days off for a lot of people do not include worshipping God. They fill those days with self-

satisfying activities. There are even some people, young and old, that don't want to work at all and have all their days off. Work is a part of God's good creation. But working all the time is not good. We need time to rest. We need time with God. God did not create man or humanity just so we could keep all the rules religious people make-up for us to follow on a Sabbath. The Jewish leaders had gotten things all mixed up. The Sabbath was supposed to be an enjoyable day of fellowship between God and His highest creation, humanity. The Sabbath was never intended to be a burdensome day for anyone. The Jews made the Sabbath into a day it was never intended to be. The Sabbath was a day people were to enter into God's rest (Hebrews 4:10).

Verse 28 *"Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."* Jesus goes a step further. He, being the Son of Man, the Messiah is also Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus is the owner of the Sabbath. The Sabbath belongs to Him. **Jesus is claiming He is God** and He made the Sabbath as a day of rest for His people. Since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, He is the One who can tell people what they should and should not do on the Sabbath. Unfortunately, people do not listen to God and follow His teachings about the Sabbath or any other day of the week. When a person realizes their sinfulness and their need for forgiveness, they are to confess their sins to God. We learn that our sins are all paid for through the sacrifice of Jesus when He died on the cross. We are to trust Jesus and confess Him as our Lord and Savior. Confessing Jesus as our Lord means that He owns us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We are to do as He commands every day of the week, including the Sabbath. Sometimes I wonder how much us independent Americans who love to do things our own way really understand that Jesus is our Lord. We are to do things His way. He commands us to follow Him (John 14:15). But He does not force us to. He wants us to faithfully follow Him the way He wants to be followed out of our love for Him (14:21-24).

Mark 3:1-2 *"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him."* Jesus is always doing the right thing for everyone to see. But these Pharisees are always watching Him, trying to catch Him doing something wrong according to their view. Even when Jesus does something good, they will come up with a way to say it was wrong. Every time Jesus could go to the synagogue, He went to the synagogue. He is our example. The Pharisees went into the synagogue with Jesus and His disciples. The Pharisees see this man with a withered hand. The tense of the word "*withered*" means that something happened in the past and it continues into the present. In other words, the man had an accident and he is living with this problem. The Pharisees are watching to see what Jesus will do. The Pharisees expected Jesus to heal the man which they believe was the wrong

thing to do. Jesus was watching the Pharisees to see what the Pharisees would do or anyone else for that matter. **No one does anything to help this man.** We do not know everything this man is going through. Jesus expected someone to help him.

Verses 3-4 “*And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’ Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they kept silent.*” Jesus saw the man. He knew what the man needed. If you had a withered hand and you could not work, wouldn’t you want someone to help you? Jesus called the man to stand in the middle of everyone. I am not sure that this man knew what Jesus was going to do. Jesus wanted everyone to think about what is right, what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. Jesus wanted the people to think about how they were treating this man. Jesus wanted everyone to think about how He should treat this man and what He should do. Everyone was silent. No one offered any help.

Verse 5 “*And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.*” Jesus looked around at everyone in the synagogue. He was angry with everyone because no one did anything to help this man. Their hearts were hard. They did not have compassion for this man. This man was a member of their synagogue and no one had done anything to help him. Jesus did not expect anyone in the synagogue to heal the man. But He did expect them to help him. We are our brother’s keeper (Genesis 4:9). Since Jesus had the power to heal, He did what He could do, and He did it for all to see. He wanted everyone to know who He was and why He came. He is God and He seeks to restore life. This man could now go back to work.

Verse 6 “*Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.*” Instead of learning their lesson, the Pharisees continued with their beliefs and looked for a way to destroy Jesus, their Messiah. They were more concerned about their laws, their way of life, than for people and restoring relationships. What is more important to you? Is helping people more important or living life according to your established laws? Imitate Jesus.

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Our mission statement: **Spread the gospel of Jesus Christ;**
Teach believers to worship God; Foster growth in the Christian faith

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Questions to ask yourself:

Intro: Why did God allow the complete destruction of Jerusalem?

Verse 23: Why were the disciples allowed to harvest some grain on a Sabbath?

Verse 24: Who watched everything Jesus did? Why?

Where should the Pharisees have been? Why?

Verses 25-26: What O.T. example did Jesus give the Pharisees?

What does this example teach us?

Verse 27: What does “*The Sabbath was made for man*” mean?

Verse 28: What was Jesus declaring when He said,
“*The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath?*”

Mark 3:1-2 Why were the Pharisees watching Jesus so closely?

Verses 3-4 “*Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil?*”

Verse 5 Why was Jesus angry with the people in the synagogue?

Verse 6 What lesson was Jesus trying to teach the Pharisees?

What did the Pharisees seek to do?

Actions to take:

Learn the lesson Jesus was trying to teach the Pharisees.

Put it into practice. When you see someone in need in the church, do not think about what other people should be doing. Think about what God wants you to do. Then do it.

Next week: Mark 3:7-12

A Great Multitude Follows Jesus