**Jesus and The Sabbath Law**

Matthew 12:1-14

September 21, 2025

**Introduction**

In the gospel of Matthew so far we have seen…

Jesus teach the Sermon on the Mount – words challenge, encourage, teach 5-7

Jesus heal centurions servant, Peters mother in law, stop wind and waves, cast out

demons from to men, heal a paralytic, heal a woman with a flow of blood,

raise Jairus daughter from the dead and more, open mouth of mute

Jesus teach on the cost of following Him

Jesus send His D’s as sheep in the midst of wolves to preach the Kingdom of Hvn

Jesus give assurance to JTB’s D’s that He is the Coming One

Jesus rebuke the cities that witnessed most of His mighty works for non-response

Jesus explain knowing God as God’s sovereign choice and man’s human responsibility

But brewing beneath the surface has been opposition by the Jewish leadership

9:3 after Jesus says ‘your sins are forgiven’ He is accused of blasphemy

9:11 aftr JS calls Matthew, He is accused of being a frnd of tax collectrs& sinners

9:34 after Jesus casts out demon, He is accused of doing by ruler of the demons

Today look at 12:1-14 and the opposition intensifies around Jesus and the Sabbath Law

**The Sabbath Law Given**

Creation 7th day, Gn2:1-3, God rested

Ex 16:23-29 God fed people w Manna, gather 6 days not on the seventh

Ex 20 ten commandments of law given including the 4th – Sabbath 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy – separate to God

6 days you shall labor and do work, 7th day a sabbath [rest] of the Lord your God

You do not work, you nor your …

6 days Lord made heaven and earth and rested on the 7th day

Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it

Ex 31:16 perpetual statute to be observed by Israel

**The Sabbath Law Observed In The Old Testament**

During the Exodus, one man was put to death for violating Nb15:32-36, example

In general, there was not a God honoring observance during Exodus Ezk20:10-24

A few verses that imply it was observed during the kingdom period 2Kn423 115 2Ch238

A few verses saying God not pleased w observance “ ” Is112-15 Jer1719-23; +if do Is5813 -593

Israel wrong attitude Amos 8:5

The land observe sabbaths according to Jeremiah for 70 years 2Ch36:21

Ezekiel explaining priests not following Sabbath explanation for exile Ezk22:23-26

Nehemiah tried to restore and reform Sabbath observance but met resistance 1031 1315-22

**The Sabbath Law Between the Testaments**

39 articles of work [Melakhot] developed by scribes, regulations and restriction to preserve

the spirit of the Sabbath law, like a shell protects a kernel, hedge it in, fence

these traditions not from Moses/Isaiah/Ezekiel came to be thought of as Law

39 articles followed even in war which of course led to death, loss, defeat

First exception was during Maccabean revolt, Matthias ruled self-defense OK on sabbath

Many exceptions followd 2get arnd the letter of the law – casuistry [clever workarounds]

2Kcubits allowed 2walk, but if Uhad put food 4two meals day B4, walk addl 2K

‘rules abt Sabbath are as a mountain hanging by a hair, teaching is scanty rules are many’

This is the worldview of the Sabbath Jesus faced, traditions and legalism – man-made views

**Jesus and the Sabbath Law – Two Questions Opposing Jesus, Part 1**

**I. Jesus Questioned About His Disciples Working on The Sabbath 1-8**

A. The Question 1-2

Setting – Sabbath day and Jesus and His disciples walking through a grainfield

The disciples were hungry and pluck grain and eat [OK by Dt23:24-25]

Pharisees see the D’s and comment 2JS – Your D’s doing what not lawful on Sab.

They [rabbinic interpretation thought of as law] see this as harvesting.

Note this is a charge against JS, but indirectly, i.e. He is allowing them to …

B. Jesus’ Answer 3-8

Two rhetorical questions 3, 5

1. have you not read what David did when he was hungry…? 1Sm21:6

2. have you not read in the law that the priests on the Sabbath profane the

Sabbath and are blameless? Nb28:9-10 Lv24:8

The points Jesus is making 4, 6

1. Real human need of hunger outweighs ceremonial aspect of who cld eat

i.e. there are reasonable exceptions to the rule,

note nothing to do w Sabbath, note also David not condemned

2. no one questions priests work on the Sabbath as unlawful, some things

are reasonable and must be done

see J7:22-23 JS about circumcision on 8th day Gn21:4

Further points Jesus makes

1. I say 2U … place One greater than the Temple is here, i.e. JS 11:27 6

2. If you had known what this means Ho6:6 I desire mercy and not

sacrifice …7 recall Mt9:13 JS said go and learn what this means

3. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath –declaration 8

– Messianic title Dn7:13 Mt 820 96 2427,30,37,44 Ac756

4. Mk2:27account adds Sabbath made for man not man made for Sabbath

Lessons

1. Real human need takes precedence over ceremony. God desires compassion not …

2. Exceptions are allowed but you must be careful of abuse of exceptions

3. Resist traditions and legalism which oppose the spirit of God’s Word. Jesus did this.

**II. Jesus Questioned If It Is Lawful to Heal on The Sabbath 9-14**

A. The Question 9-10

Setting – Sabbath day and JS enters a synagogue and a man with a withered hand

Mark 3 records the parallel account slightly diff emphasis

Pharisees ask JS: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

They are looking to find fault so that they might accuse Him

B. Jesus Answer 11-13

Two rhetorical questions

1. What man among you whose sheep falls in a pit on Sabbath not lift out?

2. How much more value is a man than a sheep? [cf with 6:26 and 10:31]

Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath

In Mk3:5 Jesus says their problem is hardness of their hearts

[to the man with a withered hand] Stretch out your hand …restored as the other

C. Jesus Critics Response 14

Pharisees leave and plot how they might destroy Him

They reject Jesus reasoning concerning the Sabbath, now get rid of Him!

Lessons

1. It has always been lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Don’t miss the spirit of the law

2. Be careful of looking to find fault with people, finding it and then planning

against them. This is easy to do and follows the way of the Pharisees

**Christians and the Sabbath**

1.The Sabbath law is not repeated in the NT. Gentiles did not observe the Sabbath B4 NT

2. Sabbath in the Bible specifically means the 7th day of week i.e. Saturday, not Sunday

3. Christian worship on Sunday is based on the day of the resurrection i.e. the first day of

the week Mt28:1 and Ac20:7 in which the Christians in Ephesus have gathered for

worship. See also Ro14:5-6, Ga4:9-10 Co2:16 1Co16:2

4. The Sabbath principle i.e. day of rest, is a good principle to live by. Made for man

He4 gives a promise of rest. Not a day of rest but an eternity of rest. Trust in Jesus. HaveU?