

## **Mark 2:23-28 – A Sabbath Issue**

TSK, GreekLexicon, Handfuls, Hayes, Henry, Robertson, Poole, Geneva, Barnes, Clarke, Trapp, JFB, Expositor, Gill, Calvin Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Contrary to popular sentiment 观点, there is no question that the Sabbath 安息日 continues today.

**Historical:** The Sabbath was 1 of 3 **creation ordinances** (规定, 法令), long before Moses. The **Sabbath** was tied with **marriage** and **procreation** (生育). The Sabbath was practiced long before the 10 commands (十诫) were officially given. It was listed in the **law with the premise “remember”**! At creation God set the example by resting. And **since the Sabbath is God’s creation gift to the church, to abolish (废除, 取消) it would be like a woman taking off her wedding ring and throwing it into the ocean in front of her husband.**

**Legal:** Moses commanded the 4<sup>th</sup> law as a perpetual law (永久的律法). Even in Revelation (启示录) you see the Sabbath, called the Lord’s Day (主的日子) continuing. Contemporary historians affirm that it was the Sabbath.

**Christological (从基督论的角度):** Jesus asserted and assumed the continuation of the 10 laws when he said in **Matthew 5:17** "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets (先知). I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle (一点一滴) will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven..."

**Logically (从逻辑的角度),** it would make no sense to keep 9 laws and ignore 1. How could one justify this? Jesus fulfilled all the laws for you, but someone you are exempted (被免除) from only one?

**Theologically (从神学角度),** God cannot change that which he said cannot change. It would contradict his nature if he did. The Decalogue (摩西的十诫) did not point to Christ, like the ceremonial laws (礼仪律) did. The Decalogue pointed to the need for Christ. This continues to the end of the world.

**I give you this as the background to the passage before us today.** This passage teaches about the method – the “how” – of keeping the Sabbath, and the correction of those who were not keeping the Day as they should.

Our headings are:

**The Accusation (控告)**

**The Illustration (举例说明)**

**The Instruction**

Our goals are: **That you will understand how to keep the Sabbath properly and not allow yourself to be enslaved (被控制, 被奴役) by human traditions – which can hinder your effectiveness for the kingdom.**

### **The Accusation**

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. 24 And the **Pharisees (法利赛人) said to Him,** "Look, why do they do **what is not lawful on the Sabbath?**"

#### **1. Jesus and his disciples were likely heading to worship (敬拜) on the Sabbath and they had virtually nothing to eat.**

The only thing available was corn from the fields - ancient corn that was not doctored up (嫁接) as the sweet juicy corn today. So the disciples picked some corn and ate.

Question: Do you notice how the Pharisees were concerned that the disciples had nothing to eat? No? Well, they had no such concern. In fact, when Jesus healed the paralytic on the Sabbath they wanted to kill him for that!

**John 5:16** For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.

#### **2. The Pharisees went to Jesus and accused his disciples of Sabbath breaking, particularly of harvesting and food preparing on the Sabbath.** You probably remember earlier they went to the disciples and complained when Jesus ate at Matthew’s house with the other tax collectors.

**Mark 2:16** And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, **they said to His disciples,** "How *is it* that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"

You get a sense of their “real” concern. **These men were doing the work of their father the Devil...sowing discord among brothers to break up the community of believers.**

#### **3. But this accusation was not a violation of the Sabbath law.** Rather, this was a violation of their local tradition. Jesus

threatened those who broke any of the 10 laws and threatened any who taught others to break his law. The Pharisees were **more concerned with the form of Sabbath keeping than the intention of Sabbath keeping**. Some even stopped spitting on the Sabbath (which was working) or even going to the washroom.

#### 4. Lessons:

- a. The Devil likes to use his tools to sow discord among brothers, citing minor differences**, so they can fight among themselves instead of fighting the enemy outside. **Guard your hearts against becoming the Devil's pawn.**
- b. Learn the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law.** The letter kills, the spirit gives life.

#### The Illustration

25 But He said to them, "**Have you never read** what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26 "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?"

**1. Jesus' response was to show the Pharisees by illustration from Scripture that it was not wrong to do what he and his disciples did.** The Pharisees, Jesus said, did not know the Scriptures.

**2. Specifically, he pointed out what David, a man after God's own heart, did as he was fleeing from the murderous King Saul, and what Abiathar, the high priest of God did.** (1Samuel)

**a. By the way, if you read the historical account you will see the name Abimelech used.** He was the father of Abiathar – whom Jesus mentioned. "In the days" is not in the original. It was included to give a better sense of the passage. It is more precisely translated "**in the passage about**" or "in the time of" Abiathar.

**b. So what specifically did David do?** Because he and his men were starving, he asked Abimelech the High Priest for food. There was nothing but the showbread available. Since David and his men were starving, he asked for it, the priest gave it to them, and they ate.

**c. What was the big deal about them eating the showbread? In the OT, the priests would put two stacks of 6 loaves of bread on the table of showbread each week.** This bread represented the physical and spiritual provisions of the Lord for his people. After they removed the old showbread, only the priests were allowed to eat it. So it was rather unique for ordinary men to eat it. And yet, this was not breaking the law, but was met with God's approval. Neither David nor Abimelech received God's condemnation.

**3. Matthew used another example of those who may make a technical violation of the Sabbath, but were not guilty of Sabbath breaking.** He pointed out that priests did works of necessity, like ministers do today, but are innocent of Sabbath breaking.

Matthew 12:1-5 "Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

Because of the error of the Jews, about 50 years before Jesus was born, they refused to fight on the Sabbath and caused Pompey – the Roman general - to overtake Jerusalem. This was misuse of the law. They were straining at gnats but swallowing camels.

#### 4. Lessons:

**a. Many foolish mistakes are made and promoted because people don't take the time to carefully read the Scriptures!** Learn to be good students of the Word. It will give you directions about everything necessary in life.

**b. Henry: Ritual observances must give way to moral obligations.** So don't starve and die (a moral failure) to buy presents for others (ritual observance).

#### The Instruction

27 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 "Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

**1. Then Jesus rebuked the Pharisees by pointing to the principle – to the instruction of how the Sabbath was to be used properly. He said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**

**2. What did Jesus mean when he said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath?**

**a. He meant that God made the Sabbath.** Therefore, only God had the right to determine **how it could properly be sanctified.** (This was a claim to Deity.)

**b. He meant that you must not use the Sabbath legalistically – as if it controlled you.**

“Legalistic” means that you make a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” and demand that others follow it.

The Sabbath is governed by principles, not a long list of restrictions like: “Walk so many steps on the Sabbath,” “Kill a chicken that provably laid an egg on the Sabbath.” “Don’t eat an egg that was laid on the Sabbath.” Legalism continues today for Jews: They have timers on stoves so they will turn on so they can cook and not be guilty of “lighting fires” on the Sabbath...

**c. He meant that the Sabbath was a privilege and a benefit for man.** Man was made first... then the Sabbath. The Sabbath was meant to give rest from the busy-ness of work.

Deuteronomy 5:14 but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant **may rest** as well as you.

It was meant to give man time to worship... without the pressure of having to run to work.

Isaiah 8:13 “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, 14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

**d. He meant that it was not a burden under which you are crushed.** You are still required to do works of charity, necessity, and mercy.

### **3. Lessons:**

**a. It is not Sabbath breaking if you need to buy medicines for a sick child. (Mercy)** Doing works of mercy is permissible. It is not wrong to be a policeman or doctor. (Necessity) It is not wrong to serve in the church. (Piety) You are obeying the spirit of the law.

**b. Broadly speaking, every law of God is for your benefit!**

**c. Guard your children so that the Sabbath doesn’t become burdensome to them!**

### **Conclusion:**

The Jewish leaders, in an attempt to sow discord between Jesus and his disciples, accused the disciples of not properly keeping the Sabbath. Jesus corrected their error (and so rebuked them) by illustration and instruction. Jesus then reminded them that that he had made the law for the good of man and it has to be used properly. Man is expected to do works of piety, charity, and necessity on the Sabbath.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. First, ask yourself **if you are attached to the letter of God’s laws like the Pharisees or the spirit of God’s laws, like Jesus taught.**

2. Second, specifically about this 4<sup>th</sup> law, **ask yourself every Sabbath: Since the Sabbath is for my good and for God’s glory, am I using it the way God intends? Ask: Am I better each Sabbath? Is my body rested? Has my soul been nourished?**

3. You are only truly able to enjoy and benefit from the Sabbath because **you have been made into God’s child through the message of the cross.** You see, the Sabbath means nothing without yours sins being removed on the cross.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, I pray that you will be uneasy each Sabbath, knowing that you are not honoring God and you are not nourishing your soul like you should. But that uneasiness can change today to ease. God can wash your soul of all your sins and save you from hell if you only ask him in sincerity, knowing that Jesus died for the sins of the world.