

LORD OF THE SABBATH

How do you invest your time on Sundays? Some people devote the entire day to the Lord, in worship, Bible reading, prayer, rest, doing good works for others, avoiding personal pursuits. Others 'give' God an hour or so in church and do what they want the rest of the day.

Others use Sunday as a personal day. Others fluctuate between these practices and attitudes. How about you? And what does it mean that Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath? (Most Christians observe Sunday as the 'sabbath' because Jesus rose the first day of the week).

1- WHAT IS NOT LAWFUL? - In Luke 6:1-11, Jesus was again criticized. His disciples walked through some grainfields, and plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. Some of the Pharisees said, "*Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?*"

They said rubbing the grain in their hands was "threshing" and "*six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, in plowing and in harvest you shall rest*" (Exodus 34:21). It was okay to eat, but not harvest, in a neighbor's field (Deut 23:25). But not on the "Sabbath" seventh day, from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. This was part of their 39 categories with 1,000 applications to life, as their traditions formed a protective layer to prevent breaking God's Law.

2- THEOLOGICAL NITPICKING? - That's what RC Sproul calls the oppressive prescriptions of the Pharisees. They quite sincerely excelled in adding "*thou shalt not*" prohibitions to Scripture. Problem was, they often missed the real point of God's Law. So Jesus points it out.

He answered, "*Have you not read what David did when he was hungry? He entered the house of God and took and ate the Bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat.*" This was when king Saul was pursuing David and his men (1Samuel 21:1-16).

The "showbread" was a food offering before the Lord, from Sabbath to Sabbath, then eaten by the priests (Leviticus 24:5-9). It symbolized God as the source of Israel's strength, observes RK Hughes, and reminded them of their dependence upon God for everything.

3- LORD OF THE LAW? - Pharisees were sure they had caught Jesus in sin. Sproul notes that Jesus shows them that while they had mastered the traditions of men, they had obviously not mastered the Word of God. He says the priest recognized the royal authority of David.

He had been anointed as King, and the men were ceremonially clean according to the Law. So the priest gave them the consecrated bread that the priests were going to eat. Scripture does not rebuke this act of mercy. Then Jesus makes a profound theological declaration:

4- LORD OF THE SABBATH? - After this lesson in Old Testament history, Jesus said to them, "*the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.*" This response argues from the greater to the lesser. If the authority of David allowed him to eat the priest's bread, then someone greater than David can surely eat grain in the field, even on the Sabbath.

Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" for Himself 83 times in the New Testament. It refers to the incarnate Son of God, come in the flesh. It refers to His atoning work, giving His life to pay for sin. And it refers to the apocalyptic Son of Man who reigns over all things. This makes a powerful statement of the divine authority of Jesus Christ, in all of His actions and His teachings.

5- LORD OVER OPINIONS? - In verses 6-7, the Pharisees tried to trap Him again. Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. "*Pharisees watched Him, to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath, so they might find a reason to accuse Him.*"

They were lying in wait. Rabbis allowed medical attention on the Sabbath, but only in life-threatening situations. Jesus was a faithful Jew, in synagogue every Sabbath. What will He do? Verse 8, "*He knew their thoughts, and said to the man with the withered hand, come and stand here, and he rose and stood.*" Jesus put the man where everyone could see him.

6- LORD OVER ALL! - Then Jesus asked, "*Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?*" He puts the experts in the Law on the spot. Tension was high. No one said a word. Stay tuned for what happened! Meantime, realize that Jesus is Lord over the Law, Lord over the Sabbath, Lord over human interpretations of God's Word. Jesus Christ is Lord over all things! ☐