

# The Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23 – 3:16

## Introduction

Mark 2 records a series of stories which showed how controversial Jesus was, leading to a rise in tension between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. This passage records two stories in which Jesus violates the heart of Jewish religious observance: the Sabbath. By the end of this passage, the controversy would give rise to the plot to kill Jesus. What is the Sabbath? And what is Jesus' teaching about the Sabbath?

## For Study and Discussion

- 1) The purpose of the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15; Ex. 31:14-17). The 4th commandment commands us to Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy (Ex. 20:8). The Hebrew word for holy found here - *qadash* - has the idea: to be set apart, to be different.
  - a. How is the Sabbath to be kept holy? In what way is the 7th day different from the other 6 days of the week? (Ex. 20:9-10, Deut. 5:14)
    - b. Why is the Sabbath day different from other days? Two reasons are given
      - i. Ex. 20: 11 (Ex. 31: 17)
      - ii. Deut. 12: 15
    - c. What was the punishment for not keeping the Sabbath? What does this tell us about the seriousness of keeping the Sabbath under the law of Moses? (Ex. 31: 14-15)
    - d. There was also a Sabbath for the land. What was this Sabbath and what was its purpose? How does this Sabbath help us understand what keeping the Sabbath day means? (Lev 25:2-5)

The primary means of keeping the Sabbath is to \_\_\_\_\_. But, by the time of Jesus, instead of doing this, the rules and regulations that were set to protect the Sabbath had become a burden as we can see in today's passage.

- 2) Harvesting on the Sabbath! (Mark 2:23-28; Mt 12:1-8; Lk 6:1-5) The disciples picked heads of grain and eat them as they walked on the Sabbath
  - a. Would you consider this work and so be prohibited under the Sabbath law?

The Pharisee did! The Sabbath laws were quite a burden! A modern example in some Jewish circles: pressing the lift button is work.

- b. In His response, Jesus provides 2 examples:
  - i. From 1 Sam 21: 1-9 (Mk. 2:25-26; Mt. 12:3-4; Lk. 6:3-4), where David eats the bread of Presence. Why was it wrong for David to eat the bread of Presence (Lev 24:5-9)? What principle is Jesus providing here?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - ii. Temple offerings on the Sabbath. (Mt 12:5). Are the priests guilty of breaking the Sabbath by working as they are required to offer offerings every day (Num. 28:1-8)? In John 7:22-23, Jesus provides a similar argument. What principle is Jesus providing here?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. What is Jesus saying to the Pharisees with these examples? What is Jesus saying to us today (Mk 2:27; Mt 12:6,7)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d. Why does Jesus proclaim that he is the Lord of the Sabbath after saying these things? (Mk 2: 28; Mt 12: 8; Lk. 6:5)

### 3) Healing on the Sabbath! (Mark 3: 1-6; Mt 12:9-14, Lk 6:6-11)

The Pharisees considered healing to be work and so should not be done on the Sabbath.

- a. Jesus asked: Is it lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or evil, to save life or destroy? (Mk 3:4; Mt. 12: 10; Lk 6: 9)  
How would you answer this question? Why?

How did the Pharisees answer this question? Discuss why they answered this way (Mk 3:4-5)

- b. What was Jesus answer to his question?
  - i. In Matthew, he gives an example of what is considered lawful to do on the Sabbath by the Pharisees and extends it to humans. Why is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath? (Mt 12: 11-12)

- ii. He confirms that he is the Lord of the Sabbath by doing what? (Mk 2: 5; Mt 12: 13; Lk. 6:10)

4) What was the reaction of the Pharisees? (Mk 3:6; Mt 12:14; Lk 6: 11)

5) How should we be keeping the 4th commandment today in light of Jesus – who is the Lord of the Sabbath – teaching about the Sabbath?

### **Discipleship Pointers**

- Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy. We do this by resting ourselves and providing rest for others (not just other people but animal & land as well). Yes, there is a worship element to the Sabbath day but it is primarily about rest!
- The Sabbath is not about a day of not working. This was the Pharisees mistake - “We must not work on the Sabbath! We need to exactly define what work it” - to achieve this, they applied rules after rules, which became a great burden. More than once in church history, the church had fallen into the same trap.
- Are we taking the rest that we need? Are we helping others to have the rest they need?
- The Sabbath is about helping others in their needs (if we can) - hunger, illness, etc. - and by doing do we give them the Sabbath rest that God want us to provide to them.
- Let us keep the 4th commandment:
  - By setting ourselves apart to worship God as a church on Sunday.
  - By taking the rest that we need.
  - By helping others to take the rest they need.
  - By doing good to those who need our help.
- In so doing, we keep the Sabbath holy!

### **Family/Group Moments**

- Review your past Sundays and see if there are group or personal behaviour you might want to change?
- Share your challenges to keeping the Sabbath holy, and request group to support in prayer.