

Lord of the Sabbath

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[0 : 00] This week's passage will look at the fourth of five consecutive conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders. Tonight's episode and the one that we will look at next week both take place on a Sabbath. Let's go ahead and finish out Mark chapter 2 by reading Mark chapter 2 verses 23 through 28.

In Mark chapter 2 verses 23 through 28 talking about Jesus it says one Sabbath he was going through the grain fields and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain and the Pharisees were saying to him look why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath and he said to them have you never read what David did when he was in need and was hungry he and those who were with him how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the bread of the presence which is not lawful for any but the priest to eat and also gave it to those who were with him and he said to them the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath so the son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath. Here's the main idea for this passage. Jesus rebukes legalism and emphasizes his deity by proclaiming himself Lord of the Sabbath. Once again Jesus rebukes legalism and emphasizes his deity by proclaiming himself Lord of the Sabbath. Before we dig into tonight's verses we're going to spend much more time than usual setting the scene for tonight's passage. Tonight's text in Mark and the verses that we will cover next week are the second and third recorded times that Jesus and the religious leaders clashed over the Sabbath.

The Gospel of John documents the first clash between Jesus and the religious leaders. Turn to John chapter 5 and we'll look at verses 2 through 18. The episode recorded in John 5 shows that the religious leaders already were becoming openly hostile toward Jesus. So here are John chapter 5 verses 2 through 18. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool in Aramaic called Bethesda which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, Do you want to be healed? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.

Jesus said to him, Get up, take up your bed, and walk. And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed. But he answered them, The man who healed me, that man said to me, Take up your bed and walk. They asked him, Who is the man who said to you, Take up your bed and walk? Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, See, you are well. Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, My father is working until now, and I am working. This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. John 5.18 would be better worded, This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only did they think he was breaking the Sabbath, but because he was calling God his own father, making himself equal with God. As we go through the study tonight, we will see that Jesus never broke God's requirements for the Sabbath. However, Jesus did break the additional Sabbath regulations imposed by the religious leaders. Jesus broke those man-made regulations intentionally to make his point. Some of those man-made regulations included restrictions on how far someone could walk on the Sabbath and how much a person could carry. In the religious leaders' minds, both

Jesus and the healed man here in John broke the Sabbath rules. The Pharisees, rather than responding with compassion, were outraged because Jesus told the healed man to pick up his mat and to walk home, an act that violated their regulations for the Sabbath. Now's a good time to dig a little deeper into some of those additional Sabbath regulations that the religious leaders imposed on the people. Some of these additional requirements are so ludicrous that they seem humorous to us, but remember, these were real requirements. A full 24 chapters of the Talmud, that's the central text of rabbinic Judaism, focus on

[5 : 47] Sabbath regulations, and they detail specifics about what constituted acceptable behavior. Almost no area of life was spared from the fastidious Sabbath regulations of the rabbis. Those regulations were designed to earn God's favor, and there were laws about wine, honey, milk, spitting, writing, and getting dirt off clothes. Anything that might be considered work was forbidden. On a Sabbath, scribes could not carry their pens, tailors could not carry their needles, and students could not carry their books, because if they did that, they might be tempted to do work on the Sabbath. For that matter, carrying anything heavier than a dried fig was forbidden. An object picked up in a public place could only be set down in a private place, and if the objects were tossed into the air, it had to be caught with the same hand, because if you caught it with the other hand, that was considered to be work. No insects could be killed on the Sabbath.

No candle or flame could be lit or extinguished. Nothing could be bought or sold. No bathing was allowed on the Sabbath, because water might spill out onto the floor and accidentally wash it. No furniture could be moved inside the house, because that might create ruts in the dirt floor and be considered plowing. An egg could not be boiled, or radish could not be left in salt, because it would become a pickle.

Pickling constituted work, after all. And sick people were only allowed enough treatment to keep them alive. Any medical treatment that improved their condition was considered work and prohibited.

Women could not look in a mirror, because they might be tempted to pull out any gray hairs they spotted. Nor were they allowed to wear any jewelry, because jewelry weighed more than a dried fig. The jewelry restriction also would have applied to men, because of the jewelry's weight, but I couldn't find anything that said whether men were prohibited from pulling out gray hairs.

[7 : 58] Other activities that were banned on the Sabbath included washing clothes, dyeing wool, shearing sheep, spinning wool, tying or untying a knot, sowing seed, plowing a field, reaping a harvest, binding sheaves, threshing wheat, grinding flour, kneading dough, or preparing its meat.

One of the more interesting restrictions related to the distance people could travel on the Sabbath. A person was not allowed to travel more than 3,000 feet from home, or to take more than 1,999 steps.

But the rabbis devised creative ways to get around this. If someone placed food at the 3,000 foot point before the Sabbath began, that point was considered to be an extension of your house. And so that enabled a person to travel another 3,000 feet. I'm still not sure how they got around the step requirement with that, though. But if a rope or a piece of wood was placed across a narrow street or an alley, it was considered a doorway, and that made it part of the home, allowing the 3,000 feet of travel to begin there.

And even today, in modern times, Jewish neighborhoods connect houses together using cords and ropes. Doing so from the perspective of rabbinic law creates a single home out of every connected building, allowing people to move freely within the defined area without being limited to the 3,000 foot restriction, and to carry household items like keys, medicine, strollers, canes, and babies.

[9 : 37] This next restriction may surprise you the most, because the Jews were even forbidden to defend their lives on the Sabbath. In the wars of the Maccabees, the Syrians finally overcame the Jews by attacking on the Sabbath because the Jews were unwilling to break the Sabbath rules.

In fairness to the people of that time, we need to consider how such a restrictive system of man-made Sabbath laws came into existence. Believe it or not, the original restrictions likely started with good intentions.

That sounds almost unbelievable, but consider what had happened to the Israelites up to Jesus' time. Centuries earlier, the Israelites had gone into exile from the Promised Land because they broke the law of God.

Now they were back in the land, but they were still in captivity to the Romans. They were waiting for the Messiah, and the Pharisees believed that if Israel kept the law and became obedient enough,

the Messiah would come.

If they didn't keep the law, they feared going back into exile again, so the Pharisees decided to be extra careful. They didn't want people to break their written law, so they added further restrictions in an attempt to keep the people away from any breach.

[10 : 55] Over time, these restrictions had multiplied so much that the religious leaders had become legalistic about them. Legalism is raising something to the level of biblical mandate and command that Jesus and God had never commanded nor prohibited in His Word.

It is taking our traditions and preferences and imposing them on others in an act of spiritual superiority, even though the Bible does not make such practices universally prescriptive.

One of the side effects of legalism is that it almost always leads to self-righteousness. Legalism is characterized by looking for shortcomings in others rather than ourselves.

It looks for what is wrong in someone's life to criticize and condemn them rather than look for what is right so that we can commend and encourage them. It reinforces feelings of spiritual superiority and elitism that are man-centered rather than Christ-centered.

It focuses on external behavior rather than issues of the heart. Legalism says things like, I don't dance, cuss, smoke, have immoral sex, or do drugs, so I'm better than you who do.

[12 : 07] Or maybe it's things like, you don't use the right Bible translation, listen to the right music, wear the right clothes, or contribute the right amount so you're not as close to God as I am.

All of those things are things that we need to be careful about. God originally intended the Sabbath to be a good thing for His people. Let's look at what God actually said about the Sabbath.

Honoring the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments. If you look at Exodus 20, verses 8-11, you'll see what God said about it.

Exodus 20, 8-11 say, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant, or your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates.

[13 : 10] For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The command to observe the Sabbath, like the other nine commandments, was intended to promote love toward God and other people. What God established as a day of reverence toward Him and refreshment from work, the Pharisees and scribes transformed into a day of stifling regulation and restriction.

The command to honor a Sabbath is unique to Judaism. Islam may honor Mecca and the Koran. Hindus may honor the Ganges River, but neither of them has a comparable day of rest and worship.

The Sabbath proclaimed God as Lord of creation and time, and it set the Jews apart as a holy and unique people. The Sabbath was intended to be a day of worship and rest for God's people under the Old Covenant.

The word Sabbath itself is derived from the Hebrew term Shabbat, meaning to rest, to cease, or to desist. On the seventh day of each week, the Israelites were to refrain from working to focus their attention on honoring the Lord.

[14 : 30] Over the 15 centuries from the time of Moses to the ministry of Jesus, the Sabbath accumulated the vast number of additional rabbinic rules and restrictions, which made observing the seventh day an overpowering burden.

Somebody said the Jews were working hard at trying to do nothing. When Jesus began openly to violate the Sabbath traditions, it was like declaring war against the religious establishment.

He began his campaign by healing the man in John 5, who'd been sick for those 38 years, and he followed that healing with the events recorded in tonight's section of Mark.

That, perhaps, is my all-time longest introduction to a lesson. We're more than a third of the way through our lesson time, and we've yet to look at the main text.

That long introduction was intentional, though. To fully understand why the Pharisees got so upset about Jesus' Sabbath actions, we need to understand how the Jews viewed the Sabbath.

[15 : 33] We will see tonight that Jesus frees his people from the man-made burdens of the Sabbath and brings our attention back to what is really important. And that's why the main idea of the Mark text is that Jesus rebukes legalism and emphasizes his deity by proclaiming himself Lord

of the Sabbath.

Jesus rightly claiming to be God, including being Lord of the Sabbath, has several consequences. Jesus gets to be the one to make the rules for the Sabbath and to explain those Sabbath rules. In tonight's passage, we will see Jesus explain those rules. Remember what we've seen in the previous conflicts with the scribes and the Pharisees. First, the religious leaders complained that Jesus claimed to be God and to forgive sins.

We saw that in chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. Next, they were offended because he fellowshiped with sinners. We saw that in chapter 2, verses 13 through 17.

Then, Jesus did not fast according to their religious traditions. We saw that last week in chapter 2, verses 18 through 22. And now they take issue because Jesus does not honor the Sabbath the way that they believe he should.

[16:49] And we'll see that this week as we finish chapter 2 and next week as we chart chapter 3. We're going to split tonight's Mark text into three sections, starting with verses 23 and 24 of chapter 2.

And in verses 23 and 24, we see exasperation. So exasperation is your first blank. That exasperation comes from the Pharisees.

The Pharisees follow the pattern we have seen in each of these conflicts. They begin the conversation with a question. Look at verses 23 and 24 of Mark chapter 2 again.

One Sabbath, he, Jesus, was going through the grain fields. And as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?

Do you get the sense of indignation here? Typically, when someone starts a question with look, the question has a negative motivation behind it.

[18:00] Luke's account of the same event adds more detail. Luke shows that the religious leaders included Jesus' actions as part of their rebuke. Listen to Luke chapter 6, verses 1 and 2.

Luke 6, verses 1 and 2 say, If you have a King James version of the Bible, it says that the grain fields were cornfields.

That likely is a bad translation because the Greek word translated as corn in the King James just means grain. The type of grain is unspecified, but we can make an educated guess about what type it was.

The crop being grown in this particular field was probably wheat or barley. In Israel, grain ripens from April to August, indicating that this event likely took place in the spring or summer.

Think back to all those extra-rabbinic rules we talked about in the introduction and consider how many of those rules that the disciples broke. By rabbinic standards, the disciples were guilty of several forbidden actions.

[19:26] They were guilty of traveling by almost certainly walking more than 3,000 feet or 1,999 steps. They were guilty of reaping by picking the grain.

They were guilty of sifting by removing the husk and shell. They were guilty, according to the Pharisees, of threshing by rubbing the heads of grain. They were guilty of winnowing by likely throwing the chaff in the air or at least throwing it aside.

And they were guilty of officially preparing a meal by eating the grain after they had cleaned it. Under those rabbinic rules, we know that none of those activities was permitted on the Sabbath. But before we go any further, have you spotted the hypocrisy from the Pharisees? How did they get in the cornfield or the grain field? The Pharisees almost certainly had violated some of their own rules about the Sabbath.

The fact that they were there to see it indicates that they had been following Jesus' group just waiting for a chance to rebuke them. To be in the grain field at that time, the Pharisees had to have traveled more than 3,000 feet or 1,999 steps.

[20:38] The Pharisees are spying on Jesus and waiting for a reason to accuse him. They are the Sabbath police, or you can think of them as the purity police. They're like hair-trigger critics.

Finally, they see an infraction that they've been waiting for. So like referees in the National Football League, they flow the flag, stop the game, and they call a personal foul.

Or how many of you remember Gomer Pyle on the Andy Griffith Show and the episode Citizens Arrest? If you remember that episode of the Andy Griffith Show, Gomer hollered Citizens Arrest repeatedly when he saw Barney making an illegal U-turn.

And for some reason, that's how I picture the Pharisees popping out of the cornfield. But the images of a referee throwing a flag or of Gomer yelling Citizens Arrest should make us chuckle, but the Pharisees were serious.

In fact, they were deadly serious in their rebuke of Jesus and his disciples. Not concerned about the hunger or the well-being of Jesus' disciples, the Pharisees' only interest was in protecting the petty regulations that made up their hypocritical system of external religion.

[21 : 52] They followed Jesus to scrutinize his behavior, solely to find something for which to indict him. The hard attitude behind their question was one of hatred toward Jesus because he and his followers lived in such open defiance of their system of religion in which the Sabbath was central.

When you think about it, few things are more destructive, seductive, and deceptive to a true and vital relationship with God than the deadly poison of legalism. Legalism is destructive because it breeds death rather than life.

It's seductive because it has a natural allure for the flesh that causes us to look to ourselves rather than to Christ for our spiritual status before God. And it's deceptive because it makes us think that we are the spiritual elite when actually we are spiritual slaves.

The Pharisees were misinterpreting God's law. What Jesus' disciples did was allowed by Scripture. Listen to Deuteronomy 23, verse 25.

Deuteronomy 23, 25 says, If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.

[23 : 13] To pluck a few heads of grain while walking beside a ripened field of wheat or barley was a provision made by God himself. The disciples did not have to do work to get the grain because God had ensured that it would be left for them.

Their Pharisees had elevated the man-made tradition over Scripture. They established themselves as the authority over Sabbath day observances, usurping the rightful position of the only true Lord of the Sabbath as Jesus would soon make clear to them.

In a sense, the clash is not over the rules themselves, but over who makes the rules. We know that Jesus will gladly honor the law when it conforms to God's intentions.

However, when the law doesn't conform to God's intentions, you can expect Jesus to challenge the status quo. This brings us to the second section of the lesson.

In response to the Pharisees' exasperation, Jesus provides an explanation. Explanation is your second heading. Jesus' explanation in verses 25 and 26 of Mark 2 intentionally escalates the conflict by also asking a question.

[24 : 31] Look at verses 25 and 26 again. Quoting Jesus, the verses say, And he said to them, Have you never read what David did when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him?

How he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the priest and ate the bread of the presence, which is not lawful for any but the priest to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him.

Think about how those words would have landed with the Pharisees. The Pharisees were already riled up. Then Jesus responds to their question with his own question, Have you never read?

The Pharisees and the scribes were the esteemed teachers of Israel, and Jesus responded to their question by asking if they had read their own textbook.

Some of you have been school teachers, and all of us have had school teachers. When the teacher asks you for an answer to a question, how did the teacher react if you said, Why are you asking?

[25 : 40] Does that mean you don't know the answer? You might have earned a detention, or you might have earned a trip to the principal's office, or maybe you might have earned both.

Jesus' question in Mark is similar to the question that Jesus asked Nicodemus in John chapter 3. Listen to part of the exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus.

These verses are John chapter 3, verses 9 and 10. In John 3, 9 and 10, it says, Nicodemus said to him, How can these things be?

Jesus answered him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Our society likes to portray Jesus as a mild-mannered, soft-spoken man who never stirs up any controversy.

Contemporary society's character of Jesus wrongly has Jesus quoting a Beatles song more than he quotes the Bible. Rather than calling us to repent from sin and to follow him, contemporary society

would have us believe that Jesus simply ran around quoting the Beatles song, All You Need Is Love.

[26 : 53] But anyone who thinks that Jesus simply said, All You Need Is Love, is in for a hard day's night. Those people need to look at the Bible and say, Hey Jude, what do you have to say about false teachers?

But getting back to our text, before you get too bugged by the Beatles references, let's look at the episode to which Jesus refers when he talks about David in Mark chapter 2, verses 25 and 26. In 1 Samuel chapter 21, David, before he became king, is on the run from the then current King Saul. This was one of the many times that King Saul tried to kill David.

Listen to 1 Samuel 21, verses 1 through 6. Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, Why are you alone and no one with you?

And David said to Ahimelech the priest, The king has charged me with the matter, and said to me, Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.

[28 : 04] I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here. And the priest answered David, I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread, if the young men have kept themselves from women.

And David answered the priest, Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy, even when it is an ordinary journey.

How much more today will their vessels be holy? So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the presence, which is removed from before the Lord to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

That holy bread normally was reserved by God's law to be eaten only by the priest. And we know that David was no priest. But Ahimelech knew that providing nourishment for David was more important.

Significantly, God did not punish either Ahimelech or David for their actions. God allowed a ceremonial law to be violated for the sake of meeting an urgent human need.

[29 : 22] In fact, the only person offended by Ahimelech's act of kindness was the volatile King Saul. Jesus' point here, as illustrated by the Old Testament account, was that showing compassion in God's sight always trumps strict adherence to ritual and ceremony.

In his appeal to David, Jesus also is inviting a comparison between David and himself. God, in his word, is noting the parallel between the lesser David and his greater son, Jesus.

And this is the first of such allusions that we will see in Mark's Gospel. Before we leave this section, we also need to look at what Matthew's account said about the encounter in the grain field.

Matthew shows us that Jesus gave a longer answer than what Mark recorded. Listen to Matthew 12, verses 5-7. In Matthew 12, 5-7, Jesus continued, Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?

I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.

[30 : 44] In Matthew 12, 7, Jesus is referring to Hosea, chapter 6, verse 6. Hosea 6, 6 is where God says, For I desire steadfast love, which also could be translated mercy, and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

With that in mind, listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 12, 5-7 again. Jesus said to the religious leaders, Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?

I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. You would not have condemned the guiltless.

He starts with another jab by saying, Haven't you, the teachers, read the law? By pointing to the example of the priest, Jesus demonstrated the inconsistency of the Pharisees' own legal standard. Each Sabbath, the ministering priests were required to light fires for the altar and to slaughter animals for sacrifice. These activities clearly violated the rabbinic restrictions for what was permissible on the Sabbath, yet the Pharisees exonerated the priest of any wrongdoing.

[32 : 06] Even under the Pharisees' own hyper-legalistic standard, some Sabbath violations were allowable and even considered necessary. Then, by referencing something greater than the temple,

Jesus makes another claim to be God.

Jesus' statement that something greater than the temple is here was nothing less than a statement of his deity. The only one greater than the temple which symbolized the presence of God among his people was God himself.

As the one greater than the temple, Jesus wielded the divine authority to condemn the practices of the Pharisees. Matthew 12, 7 shows us that Jesus took even another step during his answer to the Pharisees.

Here's Matthew 12, 7 one more time. He said, And if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.

Jesus is saying, even if you have read the scripture in Hosea, you fail to understand it. Otherwise, you never would be picking on these guiltless disciples. Remember again that Jesus is talking to the respected leaders and teachers of Israel.

[33 : 23] We talked earlier about how most teachers dislike one of their questions being answered with another question. Most teachers also dislike being told that they failed to comprehend their own material.

So you can see how Jesus is escalating the conflict here. Consider also how Jesus answered the Pharisees' objections. He could have challenged the man-made restrictions to the Sabbath.

He could have challenged their ruling. He could have said that picking the grain really didn't equal threshing. But instead, he followed the same line of argument that he had begun in the passage that we looked at last week.

He said that something new had come that would burst their own wineskins. Let's go back to the Mark text now and finish our look at the passage for tonight. So far, we've seen exasperation from the Pharisees and an explanation by Jesus.

In the final two verses of this section, Jesus finishes his answer to the Pharisees with an exclamation. So, exclamation is your last heading.

[34 : 32] The exclamation is the same exclamation that we just saw Jesus make in Matthew 12, 6. Jesus again announces himself to be God. Look again at Mark chapter 2 verses 27 and 28.

And he said to them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Without caveat or apology, Jesus claimed to be the sovereign ruler over the Sabbath. If there had been any ambiguity about his earlier claim that something greater than the temple is here, it's gone now.

Jesus was clearly claiming to be God, the creator, and the one who designed the Sabbath in the first place. And he also said that he was the sovereign over it because of that.

He was the Son of Man, which we know is a messianic title from Daniel 7, verses 13 and 14. He was and is the divine king who created the Sabbath and defined its parameters.

[35 : 41] The Pharisees prided themselves on being the authoritative interpreters of God's word and God's will, but in their midst stood the one whose interpretation was infinitely more authoritative, and that is the Son of God himself.

Jesus reminded his hearers that God designed the Sabbath to be a merciful day of spiritual reflection and physical recuperation for the people. By turning it into a burdensome day of restrictive observance, the Pharisees obscured its true purpose.

The reality was that the Pharisees were the real violators of the Sabbath. Their indifference to the needs of Jesus' disciples and their feigned indignation over the fact that their customs had been violated demonstrated the bankruptcy and ungodliness of their religion.

As God in human flesh, Jesus condemned the Pharisees' self-righteous attempts to please God. Jesus was characterized by grace. The Pharisees prided themselves on their works.

Jesus demonstrated mercy and compassion to people. The Pharisees cared only about protecting their petty customs. Jesus exemplified the true purpose of the Sabbath.

[37 : 01] The Pharisees twisted a divine blessing into a dismal day of drudgery. The real irony in this story is that the Pharisees are doing something unlawful with the Sabbath.

They are working on the Sabbath by turning the Sabbath into a work. They think of the Sabbath as a way to earn God's blessing and acceptance. But the Sabbath is not a work that we bring to God so that we can impress Him with how well we are resting.

The Sabbath is not the point. It's a pointer. The original Sabbath provision of rest points to Jesus' greater provision of rest. The key error that the Pharisees keep making is that they do not rightly recognize who Jesus is, so their conclusions are completely off.

They ask how Jesus relates to the Sabbath when they should be asking how the Sabbath relates to Jesus. J.C. Ryle said, Someone's soul is in a bad state when he begins to regard human rights and ceremonies as things of superior importance and exalt them above the preaching of the gospel.

It is a symptom of spiritual disease. Remember the main idea. Jesus rebukes legalism and emphasizes his deity by proclaiming himself Lord of the Sabbath.

[38 : 32] Listen to Paul's words in Colossians 2, verses 16 and 17. Colossians 2, 16 and 17 say, Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Daniel Aiken put it this way, The Lord's day, indeed every day, is a blessing that lifts us up, not a burden that weighs us down.

It is to help us grow in grace and maturity, not strangle us with rules and regulations. The words Jesus says settles all issues.

As God, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, we do not get to choose whether we will allow him to be such. It is a fact regardless of our permission. The question to ask is, have you surrendered to him as your God and the Lord of your life?

Man-made rules will never get you to God. Only the Lord of the Sabbath, the Son of God, will get you there. Trust in his work and not your own. You will not be disappointed.

[39 : 54] When we repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone for salvation, we have the assurance that God will forgive us of our sins. 1 John 1.9 says so.

Remember 1 John 1.9 it says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

On our own, we can never be good enough to earn favor with God. To earn favor with God, we must be perfect and we can never be perfect. However, we can trust in the promises and salvation provided by someone who is perfect.

Always remember John 3.16. John 3.16 is a direct quote from Jesus himself. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

When we repent of our sins and trust in Christ alone for salvation, only then will we find real rest. We have Jesus' word on that.

[41 : 02] Listen to Matthew chapter 11 verses 28 through 30. In Matthew chapter 11 verses 28 through 30, Jesus said, Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Let's pray. Amen. Father, we thank you for this reminder not only that Jesus is God, but also for the reminder of the real intent behind the Sabbath.

Help us find our rest in Jesus instead of looking for it elsewhere, and help us to avoid being legalistic whenever we interact with others. Make us more willing to share your message with them as well.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.