

"23 And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And He *said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'" Mark 2:23-28, NAS95.

As we said in a previous message, Jesus is now a marked man. Those who will want to challenge him and his authority on any matter are ready and waiting.

The Sabbath is a critical issue to Israel and the Old Covenant and any breaking of it in Jesus day is tantamount to heresy at least as far as the pious religionists are concerned, represented by the Pharisees.

In this passage, the opposition was because the disciples of Jesus, who were hungry, picked corn on the Sabbath and so broke the complicated series of Sabbath laws. Jesus replied to the Pharisees by quoting a scriptural example which they could not deny. The great king David had committed a far greater breach of Sabbath laws when he was in need, and he was not blamed for it. The irony of saying 'Have you never read?' to people who claimed to be experts in scripture is obvious and Jesus often used this in argument. The high priest at the time of David's action was Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar, but the name is not the point of the story.

Some rabbis really believed and taught that humans were created in order to keep Sabbath. Jesus showed how absurd this was, teaching that the Sabbath was God's loving provision to us for rest and worship. Jesus again used the enigmatic title the Son of Man, who he said was the Lord (or master) of the Sabbath. This could be interpreted as meaning that all humans have the right to decide how Sabbath is to be used. It is more likely that Jesus was referring to himself as the one who had the right to decide. If so, then he was clearly claiming to be equal with God, who had instituted the Sabbath. Once again Mark raises the question of who the Son of Man is and, indeed, of who Jesus is. This question becomes more urgent all the time.

Because not many Pharisees lived in Galilee and they would normally not be in a grainfield on the sabbath—unless they were following Jesus around—it is possible that local religious teachers are responding to reports about what Jesus’ disciples had done, and that Mark applies the more specific term Pharisees to them. (Like other ancient writers, Mark was free to update older wording and to omit details irrelevant to the point of his narrative.) It is also possible that Pharisees had been investigating or traveling with Jesus.

Pharisees would not have been more than a sabbath day’s journey from a village where they were staying; thus the disciples, who encounter Pharisees, are surely within walking distance of food in a village, if it had been properly prepared the preceding day. Teachers were held responsible for the behavior of their disciples, and many rabbis considered it proper to defend the honor of their disciples.

Whether or not his opponents agree with Jesus’ argument, he has cited biblical precedent for hunger overriding a standard biblical rule; therefore they could not punish him in a local priestly court. Because Jesus is defending his disciples, he mentions “those who were with” David; although it is not clear that anyone was with David according to the narrative (1 Sam 21:1), David claimed that there were others (21:2). Either Jesus accepts David’s claim as true, or his point from the standpoint of legal precedent is that the priest accepted David’s word and let hunger take precedence over ritual law.

2:26. Abiathar was not yet high priest when David was given the bread, but Mark employs the term in the standard manner of his day: “high priest” was applied to any member of the high priestly family with administrative power, which would have included Abiathar when David came to Ahimelech, Abiathar’s father.

2:27. Although Jesus claims the right to interpret sabbath rules as the authoritative Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14), his opponents no doubt understand him to mean that because the sabbath was made for people (other Jewish teachers also mentioned this point), human beings had authority to do what they needed on the sabbath. (“Son of

man” was a standard Aramaic term for “human being,” and his hearers probably assumed he meant this rather than that he claimed to be the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13-14.)

The Sabbath was the sign and seal of the Old Covenant (OC). It served as the very cornerstone of all the other feasts and holy days the children of Israel were to observe. Ex.31: 13,17 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between you and me throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. 17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. The Prophets testify to the same thing - Ezek.20:12,20 Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. 20 And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.

If the Sabbath was broken then the sign / seal was broken and so the whole covenant was considered broken. We read the following in Ezek.20:12,16,20,21, &24 how they continually violated the Sabbath and were being judged as covenant breakers should be. 12 Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. ... 16 Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. ... 20 And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God. 21 Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my Sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. ... 24 Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers’ idols. As the sign and symbol of the covenant and the very cornerstone of the feasts and holy days we can see why the Sabbath was

Mark 2:23-28 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier November 18 2007 4
truly ceremonial. The Sabbath was the ceremonial sign that was the test of covenantal loyalty.

The Old Covenant stood as an historic covenant with the Sabbath as its sign and seal. The OC itself was one of the most significant OT signposts pointing to the new and everlasting covenant in Christ. For anyone now living in the light of the New Covenant (NC) it can be seen what a bright light the OC was for our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is why we teach that the Old Covenant was not a covenant of grace but that it had a gracious purpose.

Here was a people who were given every possible outward and emotional motivation to obey the Lord. Yet, what do we find? Do we find a people who lovingly served the Lord? No, Israel's history is a testimony to the total inability of man to love, obey, and serve the Lord from the heart. They had experienced negative things, everything from near extinction, to slavery and persecution, hunger, famine, and wars that from a human perspective should have destroyed them. They also experienced such positive things as deliverance from slavery and bondage that was about as dramatic as it could get, to miraculous feedings, water from a rock, evidences of God's power never before even heard of or seen, daily signs of God's presence, etc. In light of these and many other things throughout their history, they consistently rebelled against the Lord. They always went astray from the God who had laid out every little detail of how they were to serve Him. A more graphic illustration of man's total depravity simply cannot be found than the OC nation of Israel. This being the case we see why we needed the NC in Christ.

Jesus observed the Sabbath, but it is not true to therefore say, "so should we". The reason is very simple. Jesus was born and lived all of his life under the law (Galatians 4:4). (It should also be pointed out that because the Jewish religion was destroyed in 70 AD that no one can even keep the law of the OC.) Jesus kept the whole Mosaic code. So, should we, or can we? If you are going to isolate one of those ceremonies that He kept, then you should logically keep them all, and all without flaw. Yet it was

Christ's mission to fulfill all righteousness and to live a life of perfect obedience to the whole law. Being born, and living under the law, made it possible for Him to be the acceptable sacrifice, and to make atonement for His people.

One place where there is established in the words of Christ in John 4, the ground for a New Testament Sabbath theology (John 4:19--24): also see John 2:19-22

"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The Sabbath theology of the New Testament is pictured in the Temple theology of the New Testament, because when you look at the New Covenant writings (e.g 1 Corinthians 6:19) it teaches that every believer's body is now the TEMPLE OF GOD. Now Christians are the Holy of Holies. Worship is not isolated to a mountain or Temple. Church buildings are not sanctuaries. We are the sanctuary of the presence of God. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. And just as the special limitation of the worship of God disappeared with the Temple, so its temporal limitation went with the disappearance of the weekly Sabbath.

And as a result, the Sabbath came to mean this entire present age, as it was a lead in to the eternal Sabbath rest. That is exactly the way the author of Hebrews reads. Hebrews 3:7-4:11 constitutes one whole section of material and the author of Hebrews reasons based upon an appeal to Psalms 95 where he quotes David. He speaks of the fact that the children of Israel missed the Canaan rest that was promised them because of unbelief. In the process of this unfolding of them missing this Canaan rest he then mixes in a second illustration in Hebrews 4:4-5. And so he takes the two (God's rest in the creation account and the Psalms 95 Canaan rest) and blends them together so that he can draw this conclusion

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again He appoints [determines] a certain day, "Today," speaking in David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, He [God] would not have spoken of another day later on. It is certain then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered His [God's] rest has also rested from his works as God did from His. Hebrews 4:6-10

The author of Hebrews is doing the same thing that was done in the Old Testament giving God's seventh day rest as the reason why you ought to keep the seventh day holy as the Sabbath of the Lord. And he then argues that God resting on the seventh day is an appeal to us to cease from our own works and to rest in the work of Christ. And, therefore, the Lord of the Sabbath has introduced the AGE OF THE SABBATH, and all we who have felt the forgiveness of sins are those who have ceased from our works and have entered into the Sabbath rest. Not finally, but we have been initiated into it. The 7th day rest of God therefore does not mean that we should abstain from work one day out of seven, but rather it means that we should abstain AT ALL TIMES from any confidence in the flesh . . . from any sinful work. Isn't it interesting that these works which are spoken of later on in Hebrews 6:1 are called "dead works." They don't contribute to salvation at all. The 7th day rest of God therefore under the Old Covenant is made the basis of the command to keep the Sabbath holy. The 7th day rest of God is used in a wholly different way under the New Covenant. It is made the basis of ceasing from our own works and resting in the works of Christ who is our great High Priest who has ascended into the heavens (Hebrews 4:14-16).

"13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. 16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ." Colossians 2:13-17, NAS95.

Physical vs. spiritual: Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. (Hebrews 4:6-8, NAS95).

Israel entered: So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass. (Joshua 21:43-45, NAS95).

Spiritual NC believers: So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:9-11, NAS95).

We celebrate Sabbath rest continually not on a day or any day.

The heart of New Covenant theology is summed up this way; What the law could not do, God did in sending His Son and then His Holy Spirit. The Promise/Fulfillment advocate never says, "Grace delivers the believer from the duty of obeying the law of God." To the contrary, we strongly insist that, Grace can never lead us to do less than what we are commanded, but grace always teaches us (Titus 2:11-14) to look to a much higher standard of duty than that given to Moses. Grace, that is true New Covenant grace, must push us far beyond the law of Moses and an Old covenant Sabbath. If Christ is the true fulfillment of the Sabbath, then grace tells us that instead of one day belonging to our Lord, every day belongs to him in its totality.

Some people will not buy a paper on Sunday; they will not watch television; and they will not buy milk, bread, gasoline or anything else on what they believe is "God's holy Sabbath." Many of these people are joyous and fruitful Christians and live as they do out of pure love to Christ. In no sense are they legalists. They believe this is right.

But when you begin to declare that other Christians are Sabbath breakers for doing these things or also believe that the whole world has broken the Sabbath and if you

could you would impose laws to force the Sabbath observance as the Puritans did, then you are a legalist. And where legalism rears its ugly head there is a joy in the body of fellowship that is missing. There is always doubting about how far should I go to restrict myself to make sure that I am pleasing God according to His command. The hammer of church discipline is often waiting to come down in judgement. Grace may be preached but law is the priority.

If you are going to follow the Sabbath of the Old Covenant then you have to have a set of rules to be guided by. It is hypocrisy to say obey the Sabbath, but you decide what is law keeping or law breaking. The Sabbath had hard and fast rules if you want the Sabbath of Sinai in the New Covenant then you need rules and that is contrary to the spirit covenant and the truth that Christ is our Sabbath and we eternally rest in Him.

I struggled with this when I was a new believer. I wanted to be so close to God. I remember reading D.L. Moody's book on the Ten Commandments and was conforming to a 19th century legalism based on Old covenant law rather than biblical truth of New Covenant freedom in Christ.

I praise God that He taught me otherwise and tha now I rest in Christ, not my works or my obedience but in all that Christ has done for me, provided for me and enables me to do to glorify Him each day in a life of worship until He returns.