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The Lord of Sabbath!

Matthew 12:1-8

Matthew 12:1-8, *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.² And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"³ But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him:⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?⁵ Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?⁶ Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.⁷ But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.⁸ For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

Matthew 12th chapter in many ways, is a milestone chapter in the gospel of Matthew.

It focuses on the rejection of the Messiah.

In many ways, this chapter is a turning point.

The mounting, growing unbelief of Israel crystallizes in this chapter with rejection.

Matthew 12:1-21 we have the rejection of Christ. Then in the rest we have the blasphemy that follows their rejection.

Matthew chapter 13, our Lord begins to speak of an assembly of saints beyond the nation Israel. He turns away from them to another people.

So, this is a climactic chapter in Matthew's gospel.

The King has been presented.

The King has been rejected.

Matthew chapter 13, there is a turning to something new apart from the nation Israel. The kingdom will press on without them.

At the very beginning, when Jesus Christ was born and Herod moved to destroy Him, that He would not be accepted.

We saw it when His forerunner, in **chapter 3**, John the Baptist, confronted the Pharisees and the Sadducees and called them a

generation of vipers and warned them to flee from the wrath to come.

We saw it in chapter 5 when the Lord confronted them and said, *“Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter My kingdom.”*

He proceeded in **chapters 5, 6, and 7** to destroy their confidence in their religion. He attacked them and in turn they attacked Him.

Finally in chapter 9, we begin to see the movement. They accused Him of blasphemy.

Matthew 9:11, *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”*

Matthew 9:34, *But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”*

Jesus confronted them about their sin. They were unwilling to respond to His message of sin and salvation.

They stayed hardened in their sin, and soon they hardened into total rejection, and finally blasphemy.

Now as we have seen also in chapter 11, their reaction toward Christ.

We saw reaction of doubt.

From doubt, we went to criticism.

From criticism to indifference.

Now we come to open rejection and ultimately to blasphemy. Emmanuel, God with us, has been in their midst, but they have remained coldly critical and indifferent.

They are filled with rage and fury and anger and hatred.

Matthew 12:14, *Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.*

So, this is a milestone chapter. The storm that ultimately leads to Calvary's cross is gathering on the horizon.

1. Incident.

V 1, *At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath.*

This is a Sabbath Day issue.

The crystallizing of their rejection of Christ occurred because He violated their Sabbath.

Because the Sabbath Day, to them, was the absolute epitome of their legalistic system. Everything in their legalistic system ultimately focused in on that one day, and when He violated their rabbinical traditions on the Sabbath.

He was striking a blow at the heart of their system.

Sabbath is ***sabbaton***.

It means to cease.

A complete cessation, a stopping of something.

Their Sabbath was the day they stopped doing what they did on the other days.

When God created the world it says, *“On the seventh day, He rested.”*

He ordained that that day would be a day of ceasing for Israel. **Exodus 20:8-11**, *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁰but 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 cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*

Although God rested on the seventh day, God did not command men prior to the Mosaic Law to rest on the seventh day.

That was in the Mosaic Law that that requirement was first articulated. Then it became, in the Mosaic Law, a special covenantal sign between God and Israel.

Many misunderstand this. The Sabbath commandment is one of the Ten Commandments of **Exodus 20**.

It is the only one that is a non-moral one.

It is the only one that is a ceremonial one.

It is the one of the Ten Commandments that uniquely was between God and Israel as a ceremonial rule.

All the other nine are moral absolutes.

The reason we know this for sure is because when you come into the New Testament, every other command is repeated in the New Testament.

Every one of the Ten Commandments is repeated except the one regarding the Sabbath. It is not repeated in the New Testament, because it was a unique covenantal sign, much like circumcision was, between God and Israel.

But at the time of Jesus and His disciples, the Sabbath was in fact the ceremonial law of God.

It is not a binding law for the church, but it was for Israel. So, the Lord would honour the Sabbath, as would His disciples. But the Pharisees had added so many ridiculous things to the Sabbath that they would not honour.

That even in truly honouring the Sabbath, they were in violation of some Pharisaic traditions, and this they could not tolerate.

The Sabbath was the focus of all their religious activity. They had added so much to the Sabbath that instead of it being a day of ceasing, or rest, it was a day of incredible burden.

Matthew 11:28-30, *Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

When they came to the seventh day of the week or Saturday the laws, the rules and the routines they had to keep made it more difficult to rest than it was to work the other six days.

There was more work trying to rest than there was work trying to work.

In one section of the **Talmud**, and there are at least two such sections, but in one of them, there are 24 chapters listing all the Sabbath laws.

You can't walk more than 3,000 feet which is approximately 915 meters.

You couldn't travel more than 3,000 feet from your house unless on Friday you had planted some food 3,000 feet away.

Then, when you got there and had food there, that would become "a home" because there was food there, and you could go another 3,000 feet.

Wherever there was a narrow street or an alley, if you just put a rope across from the dwelling on this side to the dwelling on this side – a rope or a wire or a board – you created an entrance. Therefore, you turned that street into a home, and you could go another 3,000 feet.

This is the only way you could go another 3,000 feet.

You could lift something in a public place and put it down in a private place.

Or lift it up in a private place and put it down in a public place.
Or you could lift it up in a wide place and put it in a legally free place.

Or lift it in a legally free place and put it down in a wide place.

Rabbis for years tried to figure out what a wide place was and what a legally free place was.

You can't carry a burden that weighed more than a dried fig, or you could carry something that weighed half a dried fig twice.

Forbidden food – there was a long list of things you couldn't eat on the Sabbath.

Forbidden food on that list could be consumed no larger than an olive.

If you put half an olive in your mouth and you found out that it was rotten and spit it out, you couldn't put another half in because your mouth had tasted it as if it was a whole olive. Since your mouth can't see anyway, you could not put in another good olive half.

If you threw an object in the air and caught it with your other hand, it was a violation of the Sabbath.

If you caught it with the same hand, it was okay.

If it was right near the Sabbath and you reached out for your food and the Sabbath overtook you, you had to drop your food before you drew your arm back or you would be carrying a burden on the Sabbath.

A tailor, on the Sabbath, couldn't carry a needle lest he would be tempted to sew something that ripped.

A scribe could not carry his pen because he might write.

A pupil couldn't carry his books because he might read.

You couldn't examine anybody's clothing because you might find an insect there and kill it.

Wool could not be dyed, nothing could be sold, nothing could be bought, nothing could be washed, a letter could not be sent even if you put it in the hand of a heathen for delivery.

No fire could be lit, and that's why today even conservative and Orthodox Jews have a time switch on their lighting systems so that the lights go on automatically on the Sabbath.

Cold water could be poured on warm, but warm water couldn't be poured on cold.

An egg could not be boiled, even by laying it in the sun in the sand, which they did commonly.

You couldn't take a bath for fear it would spill on to the floor and wash the floor as it fell off you.

If there was a lit candle, you couldn't blow it out.

Chairs couldn't be moved because they tended to drag ruts across the ground and that was a violation.

A woman couldn't look in a glass, because she might see a Gray hair and pluck it out.

You couldn't wear jewellery because jewellery weighed more than a dried fig.

You couldn't put any more grain in your hand than that which would fit into a lamb's mouth.

You could not leave a radish in salt because it would become a pickle.

The law goes on endlessly about wine, about honey, about milk, about spitting.

You could only spit into a rag.

You couldn't spit on the ground, on the Sabbath.

You could only carry ink enough for two letters - not two letters to people, but two alphabetical letters.

You can carry wax enough only to fill a tiny hole.

You could have a wad in your ear if you had an earache, but you couldn't have a false tooth in, because that was carrying a burden.

Here are the following 39 things that were commonly forbidden:

Sewing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, sifting, grinding, sifting with a sieve, kneading, baking, shearing the wool, washing it, beating it, dying it, spinning, putting it in the weaver's beam, making two threads, weaving two threads, separating two threads, making a knot, undoing a knot, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, catching deer, killing, skinning, salting it, preparing its skin, scraping off its hair, cutting it up, writing two letters, scraping in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, extinguishing fire, lighting fire, beating with a hammer, carrying from one possession to another, and it goes on and on.

Do you want to know what the Sabbath was?

A pain in the neck.

It was impossible to rest.

You couldn't do anything.

No wonder they were labouring and heavy-laden. No wonder they were sick to death of the system that had been imposed on them by the legalists.

If a woman were to roll wheat to take away the husk, she would be guilty of sifting.

If she were rubbing the ends of the stalk, she would be guilty of threshing.

If she were cleaning what adheres to the side of a stalk, she would be guilty of sifting.

If she was bruising the stalk, she would be guilty of grinding.

If she was throwing it up in her hands, she would be guilty of winnowing.

The people were under this incredible burden.

Now do you understand what it meant when Jesus said, *“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest”*?

That is what the Sabbath was supposed to be, but as far as rest was concerned, it was a joke.

So, Jesus came along and paid absolutely no attention to any of that stuff, and it infuriated the religious leaders. This became the final act that crystallized their rejection.

V 1, At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

Our Lord's Galilean ministry period. The time when He was moving through the villages of Galilee, healing, casting out demons, preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

At that time, at the time of the Galilean ministry.

We have got a problem to begin with, because Jesus shouldn't be going places on the Sabbath.

You couldn't go more than 3,000 feet. But He and His disciples are moving along.

God's law didn't say that, but the rabbinical law did!

They are in violation of the Sabbath because they were traveling.

They were traveling through the fields that are sewn, through the grain fields. Some Bibles say corn fields, but they were probably wheat and barley fields.

The grain was likely ripening because of what occurs in the incident.

If they were there in Galilee, in the Jordan Valley, that would mean that it was around April, nearing Passover season, because that's when grain usually ripens there, in the spring.

In the Jordan Valley, it would be around April. The harvest must have been very nearby. The fields were just everywhere. There weren't any roads really. There were only paths through fields. The grain was put in great long strips, and you walked down through the strips as you travelled on your journey.

You would be walking along, there would be grain on both sides of you. The Lord and His Twelve are walking along.

Our Lord had made a wonderful provision for the traveller in Israel.

Deuteronomy 23:25, *When you come into your neighbour's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbour's standing grain.*

There weren't any restaurants.

There wasn't any truck stops/ take aways.

There weren't any McDonald's/ KFC anywhere.

As you were moving along, you would become hungry.

The Lord provided, in **Deuteronomy 23:25**, within the nation of Israel, that you could take your hands and pluck some of the grain.

This they did very common. Some of you who have lived on a farm have done this.

You will take the head of the barley or the wheat and you roll it in your hands to clear the kernel out, and then you throw it in the air and the chaff is blown away, and then as if someone were eating nuts or something, you just eat the grain.

So, the disciples are moving along, and they began to be hungry. They began to pluck the ears of grain and to eat, and that is exactly what **Deuteronomy 23:25** said they had a right to do.

They are not in violation of the Word of God at all.

They were poor.

They had left their livelihood to follow Jesus Christ.

They lived by faith.

They carried really nothing.

They had to depend upon the laws of the land, which permitted.

The kindness and generosity of people who fed them and cared for them.

Jesus didn't restrain them because they were in line with the Old Testament Scripture.

Luke 6:1, *Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands.*

So, they were going through that very process.

- Pick it,
- Rub it in your hands,
- Separate it,
- Throw it in the air,
- Chaff is blown away, and
- Eat what remains.

Exodus 34:21, *“Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest.*

The Old Testament forbids reaping on the Sabbath, but obviously this is not reaping. Reaping is moving into your field and doing the whole business of reaping.

But the Pharisees had taken this concept of not reaping on the Sabbath and they had brought it down to that fine point.

You couldn't even pull a handful of grain off.

So, this became the incident that triggered their fury because it occurred on the Sabbath.

Now they said a man could eat on the Sabbath if he were starving to death, and they had a hard time determining who was starving to death, because you had to be starving to death.

They even said, when a man was ill, you can stop him from dying but cannot help him to get any better.

They also said you could put a band-aid or a bandage on a man, but not a medicated one. In other words, you could keep the guy from dying but you certainly couldn't make him any better on the Sabbath.

So, they had determined that this was reaping.

According to Talmud:

- If a person rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is sifting.
- If he rubs the heads of wheat, it is threshing.
- If he cleans off the side-adherence, it is sifting.
- if he bruises the ears, it is grinding.
- If he throws it up in his hand, it is winnowing.

So, they made it a violation to do what they were doing, but that wasn't the spirit in which God had intended the reaping command in **Exodus 34:21**.

2. Indictment:

V 2, *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"*

Guess who is dogging Jesus' footsteps?

They were taking a trip through a field someplace and hiding behind the grain are the Pharisees, just looking for something with which to accuse Him.

They said we have got it now.

We saw it.

They had buried God's law so deeply under a pile of legislative tradition that it was unbearable. It was unbearable.

God intended the Sabbath to be rest, not to be excruciating hardship. These people had nothing. They travelled and lived by faith. They took a handful of grain. They didn't violate the heart of God.

Acts 15:10, *Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*

Matthew 23:4, *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

No wonder when Jesus said, *"My yoke is easy and My burden is light,"* they understood what He meant.

They indicted the Lord with their non-Mosaic traditions and distorted the intention and motive of God's giving of the Sabbath.

3. Instruction:

V 3, *But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him:*

Sarcasm.

V 5, *Or have you not read in the law*

V 7, *But if you had known what this means,*

- ✓ Didn't you read this?
- ✓ Haven't you read the law.
- ✓ Don't you know what it means?

Of course, the implication is they don't know at all what it means. The Lord then instructs them.

Jesus uses three biblical texts or incidents or principles to show the true meaning of the Sabbath.

- a) No restriction of necessity
- b) No restriction to Serve God
- c) No restriction to show mercy.

a) No restriction of necessity

The Sabbath was to bring rest, not hardship. The Sabbath was to reflect what the other nine commandments reflected.

Love toward God and love toward your fellow man.
That is what the Ten Commandments are all about.

The first of the commandments talk about our love to God through loyalty, faithfulness, reverence, and holiness.

The second group in the Ten Commandments talks about love toward our fellow man through respect and purity and unselfishness, truthfulness, and contentment.

That is why the whole of the Ten Commandments is summed up in this.

Matthew 22:37-40, *Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

Romans 13:8-10, *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” ¹⁰Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.*

The Pharisees didn't have a clue about love.

They would just suppress people, intimidate them, piled burdens on them. They were legalistic functionaries, loveless.

But the law of God was to permit God and man to have an ongoing love relationship and to permit man and man to have an ongoing love relationship.

The law could never stand in the way of meeting people's needs. That's a very basic point.

Jesus illustrates this point.

V 3, *But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him:*

Jesus uses David as an example because David is their hero. David was number one in all popularity polls in Israel.

Remember the story when David was hungry. Have you not read that.

David was fleeing from king Saul. He had been rejected by his people as king, and he was fleeing for his life, and he was fleeing south to Gibeah.

1 Samuel 21

Saul was after him. He came to the land of Nob, just north of Jerusalem, where the tabernacle was. David didn't have any food and he was really hungry and so were his men.

So, David went into the place to talk Ahimelech, who was ministering in the place of Abiathar, the high priest, and he told him he was hungry.

David even told him a lie about what mission he was on, but he nonetheless told him he was hungry.

Do you know what they gave him to eat?

The showbread from off the table in the tabernacle.

What's the showbread?

Every week they baked 12 loaves of bread, and each loaf was baked with six and a half pounds of flour.

Heavy bread.

Big loaves. They were put in two rows or two piles of six each, and they represented the 12 tribes of Israel, and they were placed on this table.

Every Sabbath the loaves would be taken away and new loaves put down. When the loaves were taken away, they were to be eaten by the priests. No one else can eat this bread.

Leviticus 24:5-9, *“And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. ⁶You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the Lord. ⁷And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the Lord. ⁸Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. ⁹And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to*

him from the offerings of the Lord made by fire, by a perpetual statute.”

The word showbread literally means the bread of presence or the continual bread. It was the representation of God’s perpetual relationship to His people.

It was to be eaten only by the priests.

It was sacred, never to touch the lips of a common person, even a person like David, because he wasn’t a priest.

Do you know what happened?

1 Samuel 21:6, *So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the Lord, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away.*

David ate the showbread.

David ate the showbread and his men.

V 4, *how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?*

How come God let him do this?

Because God never invented any law that was intended to overrule human need.

Ceremony takes a backseat to the meeting of need.

God not only allows necessity to overrule ritual, but the ritual in David's time.

God will even violate one of His own ceremonies. We are not talking about moral laws at this point. God will even violate a ceremonial law if He must meet a need, because God is all about loving men and meeting their needs.

The Pharisees didn't understand this.

Mark 2:27, *And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."*

David violated the ceremonial law to fulfil the heart of God, and the heart of God is to meet needs.

The rules for the showbread had a reason, but the reason was not to prevent a man who was hungry from having anything to eat.

The law of reaping had a reason, but it certainly wasn't to prevent some hungry disciples and their Lord from taking a handful of grain.

Our Lord is saying to him, “if David can violate a divine law, then can one greater than David violates a rabbinic tradition to express the heart of God in meeting need?”

b) No restriction to Serve God

V 5, *Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?*

Do the priests are profaning the Sabbath?

Yes!

Every Sabbath they profaned it.

All the priests functioning on the Sabbath profaned the Sabbath every Sabbath.

Why?

Because they worked.

They priests worked.

Do you know what they did?

They lit fires.

It is not possible to have a sacrifice if you don't have a fire. They also killed animals. That's very difficult to, if you try to keep a live animal on an altar without a fire.

They had to light a fire and they had to kill an animal.

Do you know what they did when they killed the animal?

Had to lift it up and put it on the altar, and the animals weighed more than a dried fig. They profaned the Sabbath all the time.

Numbers 28:9-10, *And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering— ¹⁰this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.*

That they had to do this.

The sacrifices on the Sabbath were double sacrifices.

God doesn't make rules that force themselves to be applied as over against that which is a higher priority, and that is serving God.

I work on Sunday.

I work every Sunday, and I have never yet been accused of violating the Lord's Day.

V 6, *Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.*

Jesus says that the tabernacle rules were set aside. Temple rules are set aside. Right here is someone greater than the temple here.

Unless you were alive at that time, you could never understand what that meant to them.

The temple was it.

God dwelt in the temple.

Jesus is saying that I am greater than the temple.

- If in the tabernacle, David could eat the showbread because ceremony does not overrule meeting needs.
- If in the temple the priests can violate and profane the Sabbath laws to do the service of God,

Then I am allowed to do it as well because I am greater than both of those things.

Now they knew the temple was greater than the tabernacle. But to hear somebody say that He is greater than the temple was absolutely shocking.

It is a claim by Jesus as deity.

John 1:14, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

God became flesh, dwelt among us.
He is the temple of God.

God dwelt in a tabernacle.

God dwelt in a temple.

But now, greater than a tabernacle, greater than a temple, God dwells in the body of the living Lord Jesus Christ in their midst.

So, if there are exceptions for the tabernacle and exceptions for the temple, there better be exceptions for the true incarnation of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is more sacred than any house that God has ever dwelt in. This is another one of those monumental claims to deity that Jesus makes.

c) No restriction to show mercy.

V 7, *But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless*

You are condemning these disciples and they are guiltless.

You wouldn't have done it if you knew what God really wanted.

If you knew that He wanted mercy, not ritual.

The word sacrifice embodies the whole ceremonial system.

That ceremonial Sabbath system was only a shadow. What God really wants is a merciful heart. God is merciful, and if His people hunger, He wants them to be fed.

Jesus is quoting from the Old Testament prophet Hosea.

Hosea 6:6, *For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*

God is not interested in "sacrifices" just for sacrifices' sake. A sacrifice offered will not satisfy God when the heart that gives it is wrong.

1 Samuel 15:22, *So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.*

God is looking for mercy on His Sabbath—and not that a rigid, strict, inhumane "burden" be placed on people's backs.

Micah 6:6-8, *With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? ⁷Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*

People think Christianity is rigid, hard. No.

God has given us standards but does not want those standards to overrule meeting our needs, serving Him, showing mercy.

Kindness, self-sacrifice, mercy, that's what God wants.

God sometimes sets aside His prior laws for the sake of mercy. If you don't believe that, then ask yourself why you aren't dead, because you have sinned.

God wants an obedient heart. The Pharisees were a million miles from that.

He wanted mercy, but they hadn't got a clue. But especially on the Sabbath, wouldn't you think the Sabbath would be of all the days, you would meet needs?

Here they were walking along serving the Lord, preaching the kingdom, reaching people, and they had to eat on the way.

They were serving the Lord.
Their needs had to be met.
God wanted to be merciful to them.

Wouldn't you think the Sabbath would be the perfect time for that?

They were the violators of the Sabbath because the Sabbath was for meeting needs, serving God, and showing mercy.

Conclusion:

V 8, *For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*"

What a claim?

He is a blasphemer, or He is God.
This must have provoked them to madness.
He says, "You are not in charge of the Sabbath; I am in charge of the Sabbath."

Jesus will not tolerate Pharisaic perversion of His intended purpose for the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was His.

- ✓ He wrote it,
- ✓ He would interpret it,
- ✓ He would fulfil it.
- ✓ He did fulfil the Sabbath.

To call Himself "the Son of Man" was the same as to call Himself the Messiah.

We can be sure that the Pharisees knew this!

They would have recognized this as a reference to the Messiah as He is described in Daniel.

Daniel 7:13-14, *"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.*

Why don't we keep the Sabbath anymore?

Because the Lord fulfilled it.

In **Hebrews chapter 4** it says that because of Christ, we have entered into rest. We have entered into rest.

What does that mean?

The Sabbath was a figure, a picture, a shadow of rest.

This is how it's going to be. There's going to be a day of rest.

Jesus came and fulfilled that Sabbath, and that's why there's no need for a shadow anymore.

That's why there's no need for an illustration anymore because we have entered into the reality.

That is why the New Testament says nothing about keeping the Sabbath.

That's why Romans 14 says some people want to keep the Sabbath and some don't. It's no big deal. If they want to, it's because they are traditionally doing that from their Judaism. Don't offend them.

If you don't want to do it, don't worry about it.

Colossians 2:16-17, *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

Our Lord Jesus rose on the first day of the week.

The disciples met together, **Acts 2:1**, on the first day of the week.

They met together regularly breaking bread.

Acts 20:7, *Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*

They were to collect their offerings,

1 Corinthians 16:1, *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:*

When they came together on the first day of the week. Why? Because that was the day that commemorated and celebrated the resurrection.

That's why we meet today.

It's Resurrection Day.

It's the new covenant.

I am a follower of Jesus Christ. I certainly hope I am a 'devoted' follower.

I am not under any requirement to observe any special holy days or feasts.

I don't have to wear special garments or robes, or light any candles, or assume a meditative position.

I don't have to offer any sacrifices or burn any incense.

I do not have to recite any formalistic words, or chants, or set prayers.

I don't have to make any pilgrimages to any sacred places; or bow in any specific direction.

I don't have to have a certain number of children.

I can eat anything I want, whenever I want it; or if I choose, I can eat nothing at all.

My religious practice is not in some separate, distinct part of life. I have grown to understand it to be a matter of simply walking in continual, daily fellowship with Jesus throughout the whole of everyday life.

I am growing daily to live a holy life in His sight and to live in accordance with His Ten Commandments.

Dr. Billy Graham making an observation about all the countries he has visited. He observed that the smaller and weaker and more insignificant the nation, the more decorated and elaborate the uniforms will be that their ambassadors will parade around in. It's as if they are trying to make up for something!

I think that there's a spiritual parallel.

I think that the further one is from a genuine, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the more they will feel the need to parade around in outwardly religious trappings.

Romans 10:4, *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus here reveals Himself to be the giver of true rest.

True mercy, freedom, and liberty to those who follow Him. He is Lord over all, even over the Sabbath.

Let us never make outward religious rules a substitute for enjoying a genuine relationship with Him.

Let us always make sure we praise Him for the wonderful liberty we enjoy in following Him. Because His yoke truly is easy, and His burden truly is light!