

## 安息日引发的冲突(上)——马可福音 2:23-28 The Sabbath Conflict – Part 1 – Mark 2:23-28

### *Introduction, outline*

- Scripture reading : Mark 2:23-28; 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Matthew 11:28-30
- Teaching text: Mark 2:23-28 (NASB1995)

**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.”

- A practical thought: There are rules in our daily lives. It’s important to set rules. Schools must set schedules for classes. Parents must decide what entertainment to allow for their kids—Is it okay to watch TV? How much time can they spend on it? Etc. Question: Are these rules made for man, or is man made for these rules? Sometimes, the intention for setting rules is good, but when you start to love rules too much, you will fall into the trap of cold-hearted legalism!
- Outline:
  - Title: The Sabbath Conflict – Part 1
  - 1. The Background: The Perversion of Sabbath
  - 2. The Issue: The Picking of Grain (vv 23-24)
  - 3. The Illustration: The Provision of Holy Bread (vv 25-26)
  - 4. The Crux, A: The Purpose of Sabbath (v27)
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### **The Background: The Perversion of Sabbath**

- One of the main themes of Jesus’s ministry is the constant clash with the religious leaders. Every paragraph in Mark 2 sees this clash. The reason for all these clashes can be summarized simply in one fact, that Jesus teaches the truth of God, but the religious leaders only want to defend their traditions.

- The biggest clash of all is the Sabbath conflict. Of all that Jesus did, what annoys them the most is that Jesus repeatedly violates their Sabbath rules. The four Gospels record many such incidents (Ref. Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; 9:13-16 etc).
- God’s requirement for Sabbath is simply that “you shall not do any work”, not “you can’t do anything at all”. Besides not working, there is no other restriction. But the Jews had over the years invented countless restrictions, to a point where they basically couldn’t do anything but breathe. Trying to follow all those rules would make anyone’s life utterly miserable. What’s supposed to be a day of rest has become the most restless day of the week.
- What is the definition of work? Who gets to define it? When people who do not know God become religious leaders and distort God’s law at will, the results are devastating. The most definitive characteristic of the Pharisees is their obsession with formality. They made God’s perfect law which should govern man from the inside out into a set of rigid rules that are mere formality. They turned spiritual matters into fleshly rules, perverting the whole thing.
- Example (from the oral law of Judaism, namely, the Talmud): You cannot walk more than 1999 steps; you cannot pick up something weighing more than a dry fig; a tailor cannot carry a needle (lest they cannot help but sew something); you cannot take a shower (you’ll clean the floor by spilling water onto it); you cannot look into a mirror (lest you cannot help but pull out a white hair), you cannot wear jewelry (unless it weighs less than a dry fig)
- Matthew 11:28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

### **The Issue: The Picking of Grain (vv 23-24)**

- “picking the heads of grain”: Matthew says this is “because his disciples were hungry”. Luke says they “plucked and ate some heads of grain”. This does not violate any Old Testament law. Deuteronomy 23:22, 25 even encourages it, for it shows how God graciously provides. God never said this kind of provision is only valid six days a week.
- “not lawful”: The Pharisees obviously thought God’s law isn’t strict enough. So they add: plucking the grain is an act of harvesting, rubbing it in your hand is an act of threshing, and blowing off the chaff is winnowing. Since harvesting, threshing, winnowing are all farming works forbidden on the Sabbath, disciples have broken many Sabbath rules in one act!

### **The Illustration: The Provision of Holy Bread (vv 25-26)**

- “what David did when..”: quoting Old Testament examples, for the Pharisees profess to be experts of the Old Testament.
- “Have you never read?”: Don’t you ever read your Bible? What an insult! Don’t you know who we are? Are you questioning our most excellent ability in the area where we have the most sure self-confidence? (Ref. Matthew 12:3, 5; 19:5; 21:16, 42; 22:31)

Now, there's a big difference between to read and to really read. Unless the Holy Spirit regenerates and opens the eyes of the heart, nobody is able to really understand the true meaning of the Bible, no matter how many times it is read. Not that God's Word isn't clear in itself, but a sinner fundamentally rejects God's truth.

- “What David did”: Referring to 1 Samuel 21:1-6. To flee Saul's prosecution, David came to a city where the priest lived, and David was starving to death. The priest gave them showbread to eat, with one requirement that they had kept themselves from women. This is very wise. Not only did the priest honor God's law, but he also honored the spirit behind the law, that is, to love God and man.
- “not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests”: This isn't just some Jewish tradition, but it's God's own law! Leviticus 24:9 says the showbread “shall be for Aaron and his sons, ... [to be] his portion forever”!

Was the priest compromising the truth? Was he pleasing man and not God? Absolutely not! The priest knows God's heart. God did not establish these laws so that people can turn a blind eye to others in need in order to keep the law. In the matter of life and death, any kind of rules or rituals must be set aside. This priest did not idolize formalities, which is a direct contrast to the Pharisees.

### **The Crux, A: The Purpose of Sabbath (v27)**

- “The Sabbath was made for man”: The reason God made Sabbath is for man's benefits. As one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), its main point like the other nine is to love God and man (Matthew 22:34-40). The Sabbath is established so that people may learn to love God and man. Exodus 20:11 says the LORD *blessed* the Sabbath, not *cursed*. It is established on the basis of God's six-day creation, so we can remember God's work and worship Him on this day.

This is of course not to elevate man to a place where he becomes the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of course is God's glory. But God is glorified *through* the real benefits He bestows on man. It is not that the more miserable man is, the more glory God gets.

Further, the entire Bible is to teach man to find joy in God, so it is all made for men. It is not to bind man hands and feet so he can't do anything, but to teach man to worship God from the inside out, so that God gets the glory and man finds true joy. Therefore, Deuteronomy 4:7-8 praises God for giving people the law. Therefore, the Psalms are filled with love for the law by those who truly understand God's law (Psalm 1; 19; 119 etc)

- “not man for the Sabbath”: This is exactly the Pharisee's error. They've got it all reversed. [Application] Christians also get it reversed often, don't we? Our intention to establish rules is usually good, based on our understanding of God's Word, out of our love for God and man.

But, when situations require us to be flexible and to seek more wisdom, our rules immediately become our idol! Think about your house rules, or your expectations for church life, is there anything that has become your idol?

### **The Crux, B: The Person of Jesus (v28)**

- “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” He who made the Sabbath is the Lord of the Sabbath and has the final say on how to interpret it correctly. (Analogy: “Our company reserves the final interpretation right for this clause.”) Jesus is Yahweh who made the Sabbath!

Of all statements on Jesus’ deity, “the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” offends the Pharisees the most. The issue is not just who Jesus is, but that Jesus is attacking the most treasured tradition in their entire religious system. The Sabbath rules are what they’re most proud of. Once they give up on the Sabbath, they’ll have nothing left, and their entire religious system will collapse altogether.

[True Meaning] The Sabbath, like other ceremonial rituals in the OT, serves to foreshadow the salvation in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). Through Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, all believers are released from the heavy burden of sin. This is the true Sabbath. Hebrews 3-4 is very clear that Jesus is our Sabbath.

[Concerning the Lord’s Day] 1) Are Christians obligated to gather on every Lord’s day? Of course! 2) Should there be rules in addition to gathering? You decide. 3) Is our Lord’s Day the same as the Sabbath in the Old Testament? No. 4) Are they related? Of course. The purpose of both is to worship. 5) Can we work on Sunday? You must judge it for yourself. The principle is the whole Bible, especially the New Testament teaching on believers’ life. The Lord of the Sabbath is also the Lord of Sundays and the Lord of every second of a Christian’s life. Whether in personal life or in church, we must follow the whole counsel of the Lord. We must not add or subtract anything, we must not establish rigid rules and then make them our idols.

Summary: Have you received the Sabbath rest in Jesus? If you are still rejecting his salvation, your soul is under a lot of burden, and you’ll never have rest until you repent and turn to the Lord. If you have the fundamental Sabbath rest of salvation, do you often become restless due to some legalistic errors?