



The Son of Man and the Sabbath

Key idea:

As the Son of Man, Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and He cut through the extra-biblical burdens that had been added to the Sabbath to return it to its original purpose as a gift for humanity.

Key text:

Mark 2:23–28

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” ²⁵ He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶ In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” ²⁷ Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Key points:

1. This passage is the first of two conflicts over how to properly observe the Sabbath.
2. The Old Testament had a number of clear points regarding the Sabbath:
 - a. The Sabbath was part of God’s design in creation
 - b. The Sabbath was a covenant sign between Yahweh and Israel
 - c. Jews were not to work on the Sabbath
 - d. Violating the sabbath years was part of what led to the exile
 - e. The Sabbath was to be celebrated and delighted in
3. To “protect” the Sabbath, many extra laws were created by religious leaders. These laws went far beyond the actual Biblical commands and ended up obscuring the actual purpose of the Sabbath.

4. When questioned about His disciples' violation of Sabbath laws, Jesus responded in three clear ways:
 - a. He went to the Scripture (not rabbinic laws) to determine what was lawful
 - b. he went back to the original intent of the Sabbath to determine proper practices
 - c. He declared that as the Son of Man He was Lord of the Sabbath

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Am I surprised to learn that the Old Testament law allowed people to pick grain from the field of others when they walked through it? Why did the Law allow this?
3. How much have I ever thought about the Sabbath? Am I surprised to learn that it was such a critical part of Israel's faith? Why did God stress the Sabbath so much?
4. What do I learn from the tendency of the religious leaders to add extra laws to the actual biblical commands? How common is this? Can I think of examples of this today?
5. What is the big danger of adding extra commands to the ones God actually gives in Scripture? How can such extra commands move from clarifying the biblical command to replacing it?
6. Why is Jesus' statement that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath so shocking? What does He intend by this bold statement?
7. Have I ever tried to practice Sabbath rest in my own life? Why or why not?
8. If I practice Sabbath rest, how can I make sure I receive it with joy rather than turning it into a list of do's and don'ts?
9. Do I think the greater danger in the church and society today is to be legalistic regarding Sabbath and fasting like the Pharisees or to ignore them? How might this affect how I approach applying these incidents in mark's Gospel?
10. Who will I call or see to invite to gather with the church this week?

For Further Study:

You can learn more about [Sabbath](#) and [Legalism](#) on the BRCC teachings resource page.