

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - PART 3
What Jesus taught about the Sabbath
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Mark 2:27-28
Subject: What Jesus taught about the Sabbath
Complements: it was made for man
Exegetical idea: Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man.
Homiletical idea: **The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing.**
Purpose: To invite my hearers to experience the blessing and healing on the Sabbath that the Lord of the Sabbath intended.

Introduction

If I were to tell you this morning that I have decided to do away with the 6th commandment, you'd probably say to me, "Derek, that's ridiculous! You can't just do away with one of the Ten Commandments." What if I told you that I was part of a very important group of people who made that decision? You'd most likely say, "That doesn't make any difference. No person, or group of people, has the authority to change the commandments of God."

And I would certainly agree with you. But there is one commandment which is under attack today. It's the 4th commandment which says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Many Christians are being taught that you don't have to "remember" it any more. The Sabbath commandment is no longer binding for New Testament Christians.

Some point out that Jesus never specifically instructed His disciples to continue to observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath after His resurrection. They also point out that when referring to the commandments, Jesus never mentioned the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

So why do Seventh-day Adventist Christians continue to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Word of God teaches in the fourth commandment? Why have a remnant of Christians down through the ages continued to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?

This is the third sermon in our series entitled “What Jesus taught.” We’ve considered what Jesus taught about salvation and what Jesus taught about the Scriptures. If you missed either of the first two sermons in this series, you can ask for a CD of the sermon in the church lobby or watch the sermon video on our church website at www.forestlakechurch.org.

This morning we want to consider what Jesus taught about the Sabbath. If we were to limit our comments to the two issues raised in the introduction, we might simply say this: While Jesus never specifically instructed His disciples to continue to observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath after His resurrection, He never instructed them to stop doing so.

Throughout His life, Jesus had remembered the Sabbath day. In fact, Jesus sought to help people to understand the true meaning of the Sabbath. The religious leaders of His day had mutilated the Sabbath. They had surrounded the Sabbath commandment with a myriad of man-made rules and regulations. The Sabbath had become a burden. Jesus wanted people to discover the true meaning of the Sabbath. And His prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, recorded in Matt 24 makes it clear that Jesus expected His followers to be still remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy. He encouraged His followers to pray that their flight would not be in the winter or on the Sabbath. Matt 24:20

What about the fact that Jesus never mentioned the fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” when quoting the commandments? The incident that is being referred to here is found in Luke 18:20. Jesus is talking to the rich young ruler, and He says,

“You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother.” Jesus quotes the 7th commandment, the 6th commandment, the 8th commandment, the 9th commandment, and the 5th commandment, in that order. Can that text be used to prove that Jesus no longer expected New Testament Christians to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? I think not. It’s true that Jesus doesn’t quote the 4th commandment. But neither does He quote the 1st commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” Or the second commandment, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image.” Or the 3rd commandment, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.” Or the 10th commandment, “You shall not covet.” Would it be sound logic to argue that all of those commandments are no longer binding as well? I don’t think so. Jesus Himself said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” Matt 5:17

Jesus never even hinted that the seventh day Sabbath was abolished, replaced or done away with. What then did Jesus teach about the Sabbath?

Jesus taught that the Sabbath is a time of blessing. Our loving Creator provided the Sabbath for our benefit, as a time of blessing. Listen to the words of Jesus, recorded in Mark 2:27. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day had turned the Sabbath into a burden. I have no doubt that they had good intentions. After all, they wanted to protect the edges of the Sabbath, and how the Sabbath was observed. But by a multitude of man-made regulations, they had turned the Sabbath into something that God never intended. They had mutilated God’s blessing and made it a burden. And so when

they saw the disciples of Jesus plucking heads of grain as they walked through a grain field on the Sabbath, the Pharisees said, “They are breaking the Sabbath. That’s not allowed! According to our man-made supplements to the fourth commandment, that’s a transgression.”

And Jesus confronts this distorted view of the Sabbath. He says, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath was blessed and sanctified for man’s benefit. And if anyone understood the true purpose of the Sabbath, it was Jesus, the Son of God. The apostle John tells us, speaking by the Holy Spirit, that all things were made by the Word, that Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. That means that the eternal Son of God, who came into the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, He was the One who created the Sabbath as the concluding act of His creative work. That’s why He could claim to be Lord of the Sabbath day, as recorded in Mark 2:28. And according to Jesus, the Sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath is to be a time of blessing, not a burden.

The Sabbath is a time of blessing because it is a time to remember who we are and who God is. For six days we are laboring and doing all our work. And if it were not for the blessing of the Sabbath, many of us would be working 7 days a week. Am I speaking the truth this morning? We need the Sabbath. Not as some kind of additional obligation that complicates our already hectic lives. We need the Sabbath as a time of blessing to remember who we are and who God is.

We need the Sabbath to remember that there is more to our past than cosmic coincidences.

We need the Sabbath to remember that there is more to our present than making a living.

We need the Sabbath to remember that there is more to our future than AARP and

retirement.

The Sabbath is a time of blessing because it reminds us each week who we are and who God is. But the Sabbath is not only a time of blessing for us as individuals. The Sabbath is also a time of blessing as we allow God to bless others through us. Listen to the words of Jesus, recorded in Matt 12:12. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." You say, "Why in the world would Jesus need to say that?" Because the Pharisees saw even works of kindness and mercy on the Sabbath as a transgression of the Sabbath commandment. But Jesus says, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." The Sabbath was made for man. It is intended to be a time of blessing, not a burden. If you see someone in need, there is no better time to let God bless that person through you than on the Sabbath day. Why? Because the Sabbath is a time of blessing. That's what Jesus taught.

I remember one Sabbath day that I returned home from church to our house in Wescoesville, PA. Our neighbors, the Henry's were committed Christians, members of the Moravian church. As I drove into my driveway, I noticed that Michael Henry was standing in front of his car, looking under the hood. That's usually a sign that there's a problem! So I called out to him, "What's the problem, Mike?" "Oh," he said, "it's my battery. It's dead!" I stopped my car, went into my garage, got my jumper cables, jumped back into my car, and drove over into his driveway. Within a few minutes, we had hooked up the jumper cables, and his car was running!"

As I waved goodbye, he said, "I really appreciate your help. I wasn't going to ask you because I know it's your Sabbath. I appreciated his sensitivity. I wouldn't have helped him remodel his bathroom on Sabbath! But he was in trouble. He needed help. And I was happy to

lend a helping hand because the Sabbath is a time of blessing. It's a time when we are blessed and when we can extend blessing to those around us. So bless someone today. Visit someone who is in the hospital. Invite someone who is lonely to take a walk with your family. Share your lunch with someone. And do so knowing that you are experiencing the true meaning of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a time of blessing. That's what Jesus taught.

But Jesus taught that the Sabbath is not only a time of blessing. The Sabbath is also a time for healing. As you read the gospel record, you discover that Jesus intentionally healed people on the Sabbath day. He knew that His actions would arouse opposition from the religious leaders. He knew that they would accuse Him of being a Sabbath-breaker. He could have waited until another day. But Jesus could not allow the truth about the Sabbath to be distorted by man-made traditions. The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing.

Let's look at three miracles that Jesus performed on the Sabbath day. As we examine these stories, we will learn a great deal about what Jesus taught about the Sabbath. The first miracle we are going to consider is recorded in John 5. I'm reading from John 5, beginning with verse 1. "....."

Why do you think that Jesus asked this man to take his sleeping mat with him? Can you imagine what that sleeping mat smelled like after lying on it year after year after year? Why, I would have said, "Just get up and walk. Forget about the sleeping mat." But Jesus said, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." Why do you think that Jesus gave those instructions? I think we find the answer at the end of John 5:9. What does the Word of God tell us? "That day was the Sabbath." Jesus was deliberately drawing attention to this healing. Didn't He know that the religious leaders would criticize Him? Didn't Jesus know that they would accuse Him of being a

Sabbath-breaker? Of course He did. And that criticism came almost immediately. Look at John 5:10. “The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath: It is not lawful for you to carry your bed.” They totally missed this opportunity to praise the name of the Lord. After all, this man had been a paralytic for 38 years. And he had been healed. But they totally missed that. All the religious leaders could see was a transgression of their Sabbath regulations. But Jesus performed the miracle in spite of their opposition. He healed this man on the Sabbath day in spite of the criticism that He would receive. Why? Because Jesus could not tolerate a distorted view of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given by God as a blessing, not a burden. The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing.

Let’s look at a second miracle that Jesus intentionally performed on the Sabbath day. The story is recorded in Luke 13, beginning with verse 10. “.....”

It is not only lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. It is not only lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath is the time when healing ought to occur. There’s no better time than the Sabbath to be made whole. That’s what Jesus taught. And so Jesus actually got upset when people distorted the true meaning of the Sabbath. On one occasion, Jesus entered a synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he noticed a man present who had a withered hand. The story is recorded in Mark 3. If you read between the lines, it looks like a set up. The religious leaders have actually placed this man in the congregation as a trap. We pick up the story in Mark 3:2. “.....”

What a tragedy! These religious leaders totally missed the true purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given as a time of blessing and healing. But they had mutilated the Sabbath and made it into a burden. And because Jesus didn’t yield to their myriad of man-made

regulations, they were ready to kill Him. What a tragedy!

But it's also a tragedy if we miss the true purpose of the Sabbath. We could also fall into the trap of remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy just because "it's the right thing to do." We could fall into the trap of remembering the Sabbath day to keep holy just to fulfill some legalistic obligation. And we will be totally missing the true purpose of the Sabbath. Jesus wants you to experience the Sabbath as a time of blessing and healing. Do you need blessing and healing in your life today? There is no better time to experience healing than on the Sabbath day. Because the Sabbath is a time of blessing healing.

That's one reason why it's good for us to gather together for worship every Sabbath day. We could worship God by ourselves. We could go to the mountains or to the desert and spend time alone with God, remembering who we are and who God is. And there are certainly times when that is meaningful and appropriate. But it's also good for us to gather together for worship on the Sabbath day. Because as we worship together, we can experience blessing and healing.

- We can experience blessing as we worship the Lord together in spirit and in truth.
- We can experience blessing as we fellowship together as the body of Christ.
- We can experience blessing as we bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- We can experience healing from our stresses and anxieties as we cast all of our cares upon Him because He cares for us.
- We can experience healing from our sense of loneliness and alienation as we gather together in Jesus' name.
- We can experience healing for our emotions and our bodies as we come in faith and

claim the precious promises of God.

Yes, the Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing. That's what Jesus taught about the Sabbath, both by word and deed.

Conclusion

That's was God's original plan in giving us the Sabbath. He never intended that the Sabbath would be a burden. He didn't create the Sabbath, bless it, make it holy, and then create people who He could compel to observe it! No. God created the Sabbath as a time of blessing and healing. That's what Jesus taught.

Is there anyone here in church this morning who is in need of a blessing? Is there anyone here in church this Sabbath morning who is in need of healing? Then there is no better time than now. This is the Sabbath day, a time of blessing and healing. And Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath....Jesus, the Son of God, who has taught us the truth about the Sabbath, is here by His Spirit to bless and to heal. Is there anyone here this Sabbath day who needs that blessing, who needs that healing that Jesus can give.

I hear the words of Jesus ringing in my ears. Is it not right that this person should be set free on the Sabbath day? Who needs freedom today? Who needs the blessing of God today? Who needs healing today? The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing. If you need to experience God's blessing, God's healing in a special way on this Sabbath day, I want to invite you to raise your hand toward heaven. The Lord sees every hand that is raised in faith today.

We are going to close this service with a special season of prayer. We want to thank God that He has given us the Sabbath for our blessing and healing. If you would like special prayer this morning that the blessing of God would rest upon your life, that the healing of God would rest upon your life according to His will, I want to invite you to join us here at the front of the

church. I have asked some of our elders to join me here as we pray for God's special blessing upon your life. Just come now. Let this Sabbath be a time of blessing and healing for you.