



THE KING IN CONFLICT PT 1: LORD OF THE SABBATH!

JUNE 9, 2019

HOLY TEXT: MATTHEW 12:1-14

In July 2017 we began working our way through a large portion of the Gospel according to Matthew, roughly from the Sermon on the Mount to right before the Olivet Discourse. The purpose was “to receive Kingdom encouragement and Kingdom strength...” to see ourselves as citizens of a heavenly Kingdom and live accordingly.

THE LORD OF THE SABBATH!

1. As we begin our look at chapter twelve, we'll see our LORD continue his ministry of teaching and healing. We'll also see, however, a ratcheting up of pharisaical rhetoric and outright **conflict**.
2. William MacDonald said, “This chapter records the mounting crisis of **rejection**. The rising malice and animosity of the Pharisees are now ready to spill over. The issue that opens the floodgates is the Sabbath question.”
3. As the scene unfolds, Jesus is walking through some corn or grainfields on a Sabbath day. Under the Old Testament Law, the sabbath day (from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) was a day of **rest** commanded by God, with very strict rules meant for the people's blessing:

- The Sabbath as law (Exodus 20:8-11)
- Penalties, no defiling and no work (Exodus 31:12-17)
- Stay in place (Exodus 16:29)
- Meant to be a delight (Isaiah 58:13-14)

4. His disciples were hungry and began to pick and eat. In principle, this was permissible under the Law. (Deut 23:24-25)

5. The issue was the Sabbath restrictions as interpreted by the Pharisees. Were Jesus' disciples breaking the Law? No they were not. Why?

- Because the King and Lawgiver was among them, defending and blessing what they did.
- Because the King and Lawgiver continued His pattern of fixing false ideas about the Law. “*You have heard it was said...but I say unto you.*” (See Matthew 5 for examples)
- Because the King and Lawgiver continued the lesson at some point in their synagogue. (vv9-14)
- Because the King and Lawgiver declared good deeds were lawful on the Sabbath.

6. Luke gives a bit of extra detail:

Luke 6:9-11 (KJV) Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? 10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

7. A few more observations/questions:
- If the Pharisees were so holy, why were they following Jesus around on the Sabbath?
 - Not only were they following, they were looking intently! “Behold” might indicate they thought Jesus didn’t know what his disciples were doing.
 - This is the nature of legalism: missing the point. The point of the Sabbath was to do no ordinary work to focus on the “weightier matters” of the Law, like mercy! (Matt 23:23)
8. Jesus’ answers are interesting, and demonstrate a greater, perhaps even a typological understanding of the Sabbath.
- To Jesus, David and his men’s actions were lawful, because **people** were more important than **ceremony**. Jesus said, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.” (Mark 2:27)
 - To Jesus, the priests obedience in administering their office on the Sabbath was lawful, as their office was meant to glorify God and bless people.
 - In declaring himself greater than the temple, Jesus declares that his words and his worship supersede the Old. (Hebrews 7:11-12, 9:11, 10:11-14)
 - In declaring himself LORD of the Sabbath, Jesus was declaring himself not only the **creator** of the Sabbath, but also the living embodiment of the Sabbath. Jesus is the ultimate **rest** for God’s people. Perhaps this is why Paul wrote:
- Colossians 2:16-17 (KJV) Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*
- Jesus explains that the Sabbath was meant to be a time of rest, healing, and service. He does so by an obvious example. OF COURSE a person would rescue a sheep on the Sabbath. Therefore, OF COURSE it is lawful to heal and save life on the Sabbath! (Matt 12:11-12)
9. So what do we, as Christians, do with the Sabbath? The following is my opinion. As always, test and prove these things in light of Scripture (1 Thes 5:21):
- See it through the lens of the **Cross**. Christians are free to worship on any day.
 - See it **Historically**. From the resurrection until now, Christians have chosen to gather on the LORD’s Day or the “first day of the week.” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2)
 - See it in **Principle**. God is still worthy of a day in seven to refocus on him.
 - See it as a **Blessing**. Worship, family, good deeds, and rest from ordinary work.
 - See it as an issue of **Conscience**. Neither Christ nor the apostles command an Old Testament style keeping of the Sabbath. Therefore, “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” (Romans 14:5-6)
10. Finally, understand that following Jesus (both in the freedom he gives us and the obedience he requires) will always **upset** the current order.

TO CLOSE:

Taking a final look at our passage, let us continue to:

- Feel free to walk anywhere with Jesus, knowing that he will provide for us (v1)
- Have joy in knowing that he will fight our battles when our freedom is questioned (vv2-5)
- Have confidence, knowing that he is greater than all and LORD of all (v6, 8)
- Look for more opportunities to demonstrate mercy (v7)
- Desire times of worship and to hear His Word preached (v9)
- Allow the Master to use us to see people healed (vv10-13)
- Live in such a way that the enemies of Christ go mad! (v14, Luke 6:11)

Yes LORD! Amen!