

# Rest or Religion?

Mark 2

November 19, 2017

## **DAY 1: Religion? Or something else?**

1. The differences between how both religious leaders and secular people think of God and God's ways could hardly be any more different than how Jesus thought of God and His ways.

2. Secular people look at Jesus as a teacher, a man who taught us to love everybody. While those things are true, they badly skew the reality of who Jesus is. He is dumbed down to a religious figure who advocates for religious ways. Instead, He is God in the flesh, who not only loves us but also calls us to account for how we live.

3. Religious leaders look at Jesus as someone to whom we try to copy in our religious rituals.

*Mark 2:23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain.*

<sup>24</sup> *The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"*

<sup>25</sup> *He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?"*

<sup>26</sup> *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."*

<sup>27</sup> *Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*

<sup>28</sup> *So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

4. "Religion" assumes that there are religious practices one can do that make you right with God. Christianity says the exact opposite! There is nothing you can do to make yourself right with God. The problem is a million times deeper than just doing some religious deeds.

5. As the Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders, watch Jesus' disciples picking heads of grain in the field. What conclusion do they draw?

6. Jesus looks at the exact same situation and draws a completely different conclusion. The Pharisees believed Jesus' disciples were breaking the fourth commandment.

*Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."*

7. There are two very different ways of understanding this command. What strikes you from the contrast of how the Pharisees saw this situation and how Jesus saw it?

## **DAY 2: Understanding the intent of the Sabbath day**

*Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*

*Exodus 20:9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,<sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.*

*<sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

1. The question is simply this: what does it mean to keep the Sabbath day holy? What do you think it means?

2. What is the purpose of the Sabbath?

3. For whom is the Sabbath? (vv. 9-10)

4. Moses ends the command with two curious thoughts.

a. "The Lord blessed the Sabbath day." What does that mean?

b. "The Lord ... made it (the Sabbath) holy." What does that mean?

5. Go back and reread v. 10. Do you think Moses gave these specifics as "rules" to be checked off or examples of the kinds of things we are to avoid?

6. How would you know if you were keeping the Sabbath day as God intended?

### **DAY 3: “Religion vs. the way of Jesus**

*Exodus 20:8 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*

*Exodus 20:9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,<sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.*

*<sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

1. “Religion” is on the hunt for a way or ways to make oneself right with God. The working assumption is that there IS something you can do to accomplish this. The effect is to produce pride in your accomplishment, or worse, a self-righteousness (declaring yourself a “good person” because of something you did), or worse, producing a superior attitude over those who don’t do what you do.

2. How have you seen this pattern of self-righteous in you? Give an example.

3. In contrast to “religion’s way,” the way of Jesus is the opposite! Though God’s commands are still binding on the Christian, the commands point to things deeper in application and deeper in intent and deeper in motivation.

a. What do you think is the principle of “Sabbath rest?” How would Jesus want us to think about the Sabbath?

b. How would you know if you really kept the Sabbath day holy?

c. What motivation would help you keep the spirit of the Sabbath’s day rest?

4. “Religion” takes the principle of a Sabbath’s day rest and turns it into legalism—something someone must do in order to be accepted by God. Instead, Jesus uses the principle of the Sabbath’s day of rest as a way of honoring God.

5. What strikes you about the difference between “religion” and the way of Jesus?

## **DAY 4: God's gift or your obligation?**

*Mark 2:23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain.*

<sup>24</sup> *The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"*

<sup>25</sup> *He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?"*

<sup>26</sup> *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."*

<sup>27</sup> *Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*

<sup>28</sup> *So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."*

1. In v. 27, Jesus contrasts the two ways of reading the scriptures in one simple sentence. Either we look at the Sabbath day, a day of rest, as a gift from God that is meant to benefit us (the way of Jesus), or, we look at the Sabbath as a moral obligation to meet in order to find favor with God (religion)

2. How does the fact that the Sabbath was a gift, given to man, and for man, change how you see this "command?"

3. How would you approach Sunday if you knew that (1) you knew you did need rest, (2) God already knew this and provided you the gift (and "permission" (?)) of rest, and (3) That you were free to utilize the day in a way that was commensurate with these three aims?

4. In contrast, if you saw the command to keep the Sabbath day holy, and that you had a moral obligation to keep it in all of its duties and minutiae, how would you approach each Sunday?

5. The commands of scripture are meant to (1) protect us, and (2) provide for us.

a. How would keeping the Sabbath day of rest protect us?

b. How would keeping the Sabbath day of rest provide for us?

6. What struck you from today's devotional?

## **DAY 5: The Sabbath's rest for the heart**

*Mark 2:27 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."*

1. Jesus identifies Himself by the phrase "Son of Man," a term that finds its roots in the Old Testament, and would be identified as a term of divinity.

2. In light of this, what claims is Jesus making in v. 28 about Himself?

3. How does this alter how you think about the Sabbath day?

4. The word "Sabbath" also means "rest." When Jesus says He is "Lord even of the Sabbath," He is claiming more than His authority to "set the rules" of the Sabbath's day of rest. He is also insinuating that real rest of the heart can be found in Him, not just by observing a day of rest!

5. This is a staggering concept!

a. Physically, it's easy to argue for the need for rest.

b. But spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically, we need another kind of rest—a rest that resides in the heart or the soul. And that rest is not found by "religion." The rest in the soul or heart comes from the person of Jesus Christ.

*Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.*

*Hebrews 4:9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;*

*<sup>10</sup> for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.*

*<sup>11</sup> Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.*

*Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

*<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

*<sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?