

Most people begin the new year with resolutions of some kind. We all have things we would like to accomplish in our lives, and we are always in need of a fresh start.

There is nothing wrong with that – God created a world in which time has repeating markers that give us a fresh start. He didn't make the hours continuous – one right after another with no cycles.

He made the sun go down and come up so we could have a fresh start every 24 hours, and again every 7th day, and again every 30 days, and again every 365 days.

So making resolutions can be a good thing to do. We look toward the year to come and try to gear up and go charging into it with renewed discipline and resolve.

But I'm not going to preach about that this morning. Instead I want to teach today and next Sunday about an even more important concept as you approach the new year – rest.

This morning we will lay a foundation, and next Sunday we will learn the significance of rest and why it is so important to God.

Mt.11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.

2When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

3He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread-which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. 5Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? 6I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.

7If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you

would not have condemned the innocent.

would not have condemned the innocent.

(Mark 2:27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.) 8For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

9Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, 10and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus,

(Lk.5:7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.)

10 ...they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

(Lk.5:8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.)

11 He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? 12How much more

valuable is a man than a sheep!

(Lk.5:9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?")

(Mk.2:5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand.")

12 ...Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

(Lk.5:11 But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.)

14 But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

2

Introduction

This is an important passage not only for understanding about the Sabbath, but for understanding the correct way to interpret Scripture, and for understanding the Gospel.

But we must carefully consider it's meaning. If we just read over it, it can generate more questions than it answers:

- Why didn't Jesus just point out that His disciples were not violating God's Sabbath

law, but only their human traditions?

- Instead He gives an example of David violating a law. Is Jesus saying it's OK that the disciples break God's Law because David did it?
- How were we to know that what David was right? David did plenty of things we shouldn't do. (adultery, murder) Besides, David was an exceptional figure in exceptional circumstances. The disciples aren't David.
- And what about the illustration with the priests? How is that relevant? The disciples aren't priests.
- Why does the passage end with so much anger between Jesus & the Pharisees?
- When Jesus says they are innocent because He is the Lord of the Sabbath, does that mean He gets to break God's Law? How does that square with the fact that Jesus never violated God's Law?

4.22

This event takes place in a section of the Gospels that marks the intensification of the conflict Jesus had with the Jewish leadership. Here the storm clouds that ultimately led to the crucifixion begin to gather.

Here we begin the formal rejection. Everywhere Jesus

goes at this point in His ministry, He runs into conflict with the Pharisees.

By the end of this account, Jesus and the Pharisees are toe to toe, and both are furious with the other. The scene ends with the temperature in the synagogue going off the chart. It is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus is said to be angry. The Pharisees go away in a murderous rage.

5.22

Why? The Pharisees had many Sabbath rules and many exceptions, and they were accustomed to debates over exceptions.

The reason they get so upset over this is this is far more than a debate over Sabbath rule exceptions. Jesus challenges their whole method of interpreting Scripture, which has extreme implications on their entire belief system.

THE INCIDENT

Mt.12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry so they began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.

Lk.6:1 ...pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels...

They were traveling on the Sabbath (which was strictly forbidden). Their "roads" were paths through the fields.

They had no food, no restaurants, and apparently no food waiting at their destination.

The term used implies significant hunger (and you would have to be hungry to have this as a meal).

It's interesting that Jesus was with them, yet he allowed them to go without food for a time and have to resort to this. It was a sign of poverty. That must have been hard for Jesus, who had the ability to create bread, to watch this. There must be a reason.

They were not stealing. God's Law clearly allowed for this – Dt.23:25 **If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain.**

7
Guess who happens to see this...

2 **When the Pharisees saw this** What are they doing there? Hiding in the wheat?

Jn.5:15 **So, because Jesus was doing these things on**

the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.

They were dogging his steps.

2 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

Was it unlawful?

God's Sabbath Law

It's an "illustration" law

What does the Bible say about the Sabbath? What is the purpose of the Sabbath commands?

The # 1 rule in interpreting Scripture is determining the purpose of the passage. If you do everything the passage says but fail to fulfill the purpose of the passage, you have disobeyed the passage. If you fulfill the purpose, you have obeyed the passage.

TT Ex.31:16

8.33

There are different kinds of commands in the OT.

1. Laws where the meaning is in the action itself (moral laws) (such as adultery, murder, etc) The action is wrong regardless of what is in your heart.

Purpose: to teach us about the char. of God.

2. Laws where the meaning is only illustrated by the action. (Theologians call them ceremonial laws. Scripture calls them shadows.) There is nothing inherently evil or virtuous about burning an animal on a pile of rocks. (sacrifices, rituals, etc). The purpose of the shadows was to illustrate some principle.

BOTH KINDS ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT! Their *meaning* behind the rituals and the sacrifices is just as important as the meaning behind laws requiring faithfulness to your wife, honesty, murder, etc.

The only difference is, in the first group, the meaning is always inextricably tied to the action, and in the second group it may not be depending on the circumstance.

In the 10 commandments, there are 9 of the first kind and 1 picture. The Sabbath law is a symbol.

Of what? Ex.31:16 **The Israelites are to observe**

the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant.

Like circumcision, the Sabbath was an illustration – an expression of one’s loyalty to the covenant. It is also a picture of spiritual rest.

11

It is to be taken seriously

The Sabbath was very, very important and was (and is) to be taken seriously.

Although based on the 7 days of the creation account, it is not instituted until the Mosaic Law.

It became A SYMBOL OF OBEDIENCE - demonstration of loyalty and obedience to God and His covenant.

In fact, it became a litmus test for obedience –

Isa.56:1,2 **“Maintain justice and do what is right...”** 56:2

Blessed is the man who does this...who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it

Isa.56:6 **all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy**

Isa.58:13 **If you keep your feet from breaking the**

Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by

not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

ISA 58:14 **then you will find your joy in the LORD,**

Jer.17:22 **But if you are careful to obey me, declares the LORD, and bring no load through the gates of this city on the Sabbath,**

but keep the Sabbath day holy by not doing any work on it,²⁵ then kings who sit on David’s throne will come

through the gates of this city... and **this city will be inhabited forever....²⁷ But if you do not obey me to keep the Sabbath day holy** by not carrying any

load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day,

then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses.’ “

Keeping the Sabbath became shorthand for faithfulness and obedience to God in general.

It was so important, Ex.31 prescribed the death penalty for a violation.

13

What constitutes a violation?

– how does one take it seriously?

1. A DAY OF REST

No work – not even animals (Ex.20) no gathering manna (Ex.16), no lighting a fire (Ex.35:3), no gathering wood (execution in Nm.15:32), no commerce (Nh.), no carrying a load (Jer.17:21)

This was an expression of God’s love (Ex.16:29 **Bear in**

mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath) It was to give man the rest he needs. It’s for man’s benefit.

Why is it so important to God that we rest? And what is the definition of rest?

14

Is God up in heaven saying, “Whatever happens, the most important thing is that these creatures I have made don’t become fatigued.” Is that God’s primary concern?

No. Fatigue is not a bad thing. God often requires His servants to push themselves to the limit of what they can physically handle.

The reason it is so important is it glorifies God when we rest, because rest requires faith in Him.

Remember when God provided manna for the Israelites in the desert, and told them they were not to gather any more than they could eat in one day. If they did, God would cause it to rot.

He didn’t want them stockpiling, because He

wanted them to be reminded that they were dependent upon Him every day for food.

Then when Friday rolled around, they were to gather enough for two days. Then on Saturday they weren't to gather anything.

Again, this required faith. It's tough not to go pick up some food on Saturday, unless you have every confidence God will provide on Sunday.

Taking a day off work, in a poor, agricultural society, required great faith. Common day laborers worked each day for the food they would eat that day. So to take a day off would require trust in God's provision and care.

16

The reason God chose the Sabbath as one of the key factors through which His people would demonstrate loyalty to Him is because it meant doing something every week that showed full trust and confidence in His loving care.

If there is one thing God despises it is when a person comes under the illusion that he is self-sufficient and independent.

He despises that for two reasons. One, because it is a slap in His face. It's a refusal

to recognize all His gifts and grace.

Secondly, it destroys the person who thinks he is self-sufficient.

If your little toddler is convinced he can handle crossing the freeway without your help, that will lead to his destruction.

Once we are convinced we can venture out on our own and are not dependent upon God, we go blindly into the future, and stumble into destruction.

Utter dependence upon and trust in God rescues us from destruction and glorifies His name.

17

So in OT times, you take the Sabbath seriously by observing it – by ceasing your work on that day. That shows God's kindness to us and our trust in Him.

2. A DAY OF WORSHIP

Lv.23:3 " **There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly.**

Ps.92 is a song of worship written specifically for Sabbath Day worship.

It was a day set aside for focusing on rejoicing in God and finding your joy in the Lord.

Isa.58:13 If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, 14 then you will find your joy in the LORD

That last phrase is the key. Every human being faces a fundamental choice in life. Are you going to find your **joy in the LORD**, or in **doing as you please?**

Doing as you please is not rest. Finding joy in the Lord is.

18.21

The keeping of the Sabbath was part of an expression of what was on the inside, and so keeping the Sabbath meant nothing unless it was an expression of a pure heart.

God had no interest whatsoever in people keeping the Sabbath if their hearts were evil, because since it is an illustration type command, it is devoid of all meaning if it is practiced only on the outside.

Amos 8:4 Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land,⁵ saying, “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?”—skimming the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales...⁸ “Will not the land tremble for this,...¹⁰ I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping.

If you go through the motions of a command that is to be a picture, but ignore the meaning, it is detestable.

If the whole time you just can't wait for it to be over so you can get back to your sin, then your external observance is absolutely meaningless.

It's like going through a whole wedding ceremony but refusing to say, "I do." If you are not fulfilling the purpose of the ceremony, the ceremony is meaningless.

To carry out a ceremony while violating the spirit is to break the law.

So the Sabbath was a day of rest and worship.

All that is just some background on what the Sabbath was supposed to be. Now let's look at what the Pharisees had made it.

20.44

THE PHARISEES' APPROACH

They took the *day* seriously, but not the *meaning* behind the command.

God expects us to take the meaning of His commands seriously. They ignored the meaning and focused only on the day.

1. Was it a day of rest? They had made it more work than the work days. In the Talmud in one section there are 24 ch. listing Sabbath rules, and one Rabbi spent 2.5 yr. Just trying to understand one of those ch.

There is at least one other section also. You could spend a whole lifetime learning what supposed to do on Sabbath. And it all focuses on specific external actions that are prohibited. (There were 39

categories of work that was prohibited).

You couldn't travel more than 3000 ft from house.

But since they cared only about the rules and nothing about the meaning or purpose, they would find loopholes.

If on Fri. you plant some food 3000 ft. from your house. That would be a "home" so another 3000. If put a rope, wire or board across an alley that created an entrance (home) then you could go another 3000 ft. from there, etc.

22.25

There were many forbidden foods. You could eat those foods, but never more than an amount the size of one olive. But if you eat half and spit it out could not eat another half because your mouth tasted as if were a whole olive.

If you threw an object and caught with the opposite hand = violation (same hand OK).

Couldn't examine anyone's clothes because you might find an insect there and kill it.

You couldn't take a bath because water might drip off you and wash the floor.
You couldn't blow out a candle.
You couldn't tie a knot.
You couldn't move a chair (would "plow" ruts).

You couldn't leave a radish in salt (would become a pickle)

A woman couldn't look in mirror (might find a gray hair and pluck it out).

Goes on endlessly about grain, wine, honey, milk, spitting (could spit into a rag but not on the ground).

23.22

The OT said you couldn't carry a load, but that was talking about conducting business.

They took that and came up with all kinds of rules. You could never carry a load that weighed more than a dried fig (or half a dried fig twice).

If was almost Sabbath, and you were picking up food, and suddenly it was Sabbath had to drop food before drew arm back.

You couldn't put any more grain in your hand than would fit in a lamb's mouth.

You could only carry enough ink for 2 letters (characters).

You couldn't have a false tooth in (burden).

Women couldn't wear jewelry cuz weighed more than dried fig.

You could stop a man from dying but you could not help him get better. You could put a bandage on but not a medicated one.

The Sabbath was far from being a time of rest.

25

And the Pharisees taught that the people's salvation was dependent upon all these rules. No wonder they were burdened and heavy laden.

It's ironic how legalism brings bondage. The reason all religion tends to degenerate into externalism is because addressing the heart is too hard. It's so much easier to keep a rule than it is to be a certain kind of person.

It's so much easier to show up all church events than it is to be devoted to the fellowship.

It's so much easier to read the Bible than it is to love God's Word.

It's so much easier to recite a prayer for a prescribed amount of time than it is to fervently seek God.

It's so much easier to stand up and sing songs and clap your hands than it is to genuinely worship God.

It's so much easier to avoid committing adultery than to keep your thoughts pure.

26

And so we tend to slide into externalism. We emphasize actions and externals and neglect the issues on the inside.

We do that to be free from the hard work of addressing the heart. We do it out of laziness to make serving God easier.

But it always results in legalism, and legalism always becomes more and more burdensome until it becomes a load that is impossible to carry.

Legalism is the story of man seeking liberty and finding bondage.

And that was exactly the case with these Pharisees.

Edershim: If a woman were to roll wheat to take away the husks she would be guilty of sifting. If she were rubbing the ends of the stalks she would be guilty of threshing, if she were cleaning what adheres to the side of a stalk she would be guilty of sifting. If she were bruising the

stalk she would be guilty of grinding, if she were throwing it up in her hands she would be guilty of winnowing.

So the disciples were guilty of at least 5 violations: reaping, winnowing, threshing, and preparing a meal – 5th was traveling (but they don't mention that because there were there too).

27.33

In v.7 Jesus declares that the disciples are innocent, and He makes two arguments from Scripture to support that.

The Spirit of the Law

3He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread-which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.

TT 1 Sam.21

Is He saying, "David broke the Law, so we can too"? No.

3He answered, "Haven't you read...

Jesus said if they had so much as *read* the account, they would think the way they do. Obviously they had read it, and

Jesus speaks to them as men who knew the story.

The point is they misinterpreted it, and to misinterpret Scripture is just as bad as never reading it in the first place.

→ If Scripture is misinterpreted, it is of no value. You might as well read TV guide.

29

Jesus is talking about 1Sa 21:1-7

David and his men are running for their lives from Saul.

David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he met him, and asked, "Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?"

2 David answered Ahimelech the priest, "The king charged me with a certain matter and said to me, 'No one is to know anything about your mission and your instructions.' As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place. 3Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find."

4But the priest answered David, "I don't have any ordinary bread on hand; however, there is some consecrated bread here-provided the men have kept themselves from women."

5David replied, "Indeed women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men's things are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!" 6So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.

30

Each Sabbath – 12 new loaves of bread were placed on a table in the Holy Place (each baked w/ 6.5 lbs. of flour). The priests were to eat the old ones (Ex.25:30, Lv.24:5-9).

What was the purpose of this bread?

Lv.24:8 This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant.

The purpose of this bread was the same as the purpose of the Sabbath. It is a symbol of the covenant, and a reminder of Israel's loyalty and

obedience to God and the covenant.

Why only the priests?

9 It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire."

It was to show the people that anything offered to God and that was that close to God's dwelling place was very special and sacred (not common). This is to generate respect and awe for God.

32

7 Now one of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul's head shepherd.

No question about it – David broke the ceremonial law. And he lied. Why the lie? Yes, D was on a mission from the true King, but he lead Ah to believe he was on a mission from Saul.

But it was an exceptional situation. Was what David did good or bad? (Remember – can't assume good just cuz a Bible hero). Does Scripture give us any indication as to whether good or bad?

Jesus gives us a hint in Mk.2:26 **in the account of Abiathar the high priest.** Who is that? Ab was Ah's son. (some indication that Ah was also descended from an Ab)

Why throw that in? It was Ahimelech who gave the bread. K & D say it was a memory error. But all Scripture is God-breathed. Why would God breath out a memory error? And why would Jesus throw in a piece of worthless info?

If Jesus calls it the account of Ab, then Ab must play some role, right? Let's look and see if we can find him there.

Read. 22:20-23

David came to Ah. for help. But then he spotted Doeg, and knew that this whole encounter would be reported to Saul. Now he is concerned – not about getting caught, but concerned for Ah. When Saul finds out that David was there and Ah didn't turn him in, Ah will be in trouble.

David thinks fast, and comes up with this story about being on a mission from S. That way, Ah is innocent. That explains the lie. Apparently David was trying to protect the priest.

David's plan didn't work. (Read 22:12-19)

This passage contrasts David with Saul and Doeg, who are evil. I believe what David did is presented as good.

After this happened, David felt bad. He knew it was his fault – yet he did not consider what he had done to be sinful. He had acted righteously. Read Ps.52

Jesus takes them to a place in Scripture where a ceremonial rule was violated and it was not wrong.

Notice Jesus' approach to interpreting the passage. He picks a passage in which someone was innocent because he kept the spirit of the law even though he violated the external action of a ceremonial, illustration, shadow type law.

David was the opposite of the Pharisees. He violated the letter of the law while still honoring the purpose of the law.

Was David disregarding God's covenant? No.
Did David show disrespect toward God? No.

Did he treat the bread as common? No.

Did he disregard the symbolism of respect for the Temple? no– remember they made sure the men were ceremonially pure.

He ate the bread not out of any disrespect for the ceremony, but because of the exigent circumstances.

And that's another important point of comparison between the events. By drawing the comparison, Jesus is putting Himself in the same category – Jesus and His disciples were just like David and his men. They were on an urgent mission that overrides anything else in importance.

Jesus' point: the issue is not just the letter of the law, but the intent.

This is devastating to the Pharisees, because if they start looking at Scripture that way, their whole system is lost, and instead of paragons of virtue and examples of piety, they are nothing but vile sinners.

Instead of being praiseworthy because of being excellent rule-keepers, they are blameworthy for having dirty, sinful hearts.

33

So the disciples were innocent because passages like 1 Sam.21 and many others show us that with the shadow/ceremonial/illustration type laws, the crucial thing is not the illustration but what it illustrates.

Then in v.5 He gives another argument from Scripture.

Special permission

Mt.12:5 **Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?**

The term **desecrate** is a strong term.

That was their biggest work day. God required double sacrifices on the Sabbath.

But the disciples are not priests. So what is Jesus' point?

Why were the priests innocent? Because they were working in the Temple.

The ministry of the Temple ranks higher than the external elements of Sabbath keeping.

They did what they did because God required it of them. Not even the Pharisees would argue with that.

6 I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.

The Temple ranks higher than the Sabbath, and I rank higher than the Temple.

35

We can't appreciate what a drastic statement that is without living then – for them the temple was everything. It was the dwelling place of God. Nothing was considered to be greater than the Temple except God Himself.

And that's really what he is getting at. The priests were innocent because God required them to work on the Sabbath. They had special permission from God Almighty.

Jesus' point is that the disciples are innocent for the same reason the priests are innocent.

Jesus: "I gave the priests special permission to work on the Sabbath, so it's no big deal if I give My disciples the same thing."

Do you see how Jesus is going way beyond debating over Sabbath exceptions? He is claiming to be Lord over the Sabbath. Who started the

Sabbath? Not Moses – it's based on the 6 days of Creation.

Jesus: "I'm the one who decided to take 6 days to make everything and then stop on the 7th, so I'm the boss of the Sabbath."

"I initiated it and I will interpret it. You are not in charge of the Sabbath, I am."
They thought the Sabbath was theirs to interpret, and would tolerate no intrusion. Jesus said it was His to interpret, and He would tolerate no intrusion.

37

The Pharisees' Violation

So Jesus has shown from Scripture that the disciples were not guilty of breaking the Sabbath. They were innocent because of the nature of the Sabbath law in light of their mission and calling and special circumstances and they had special permission from God to do what they were doing anyway.

Now in v.7 He proceeds to demonstrate from Scripture that the *Pharisees* are guilty of

breaking the Sabbath. (It's just never a good idea to argue with Jesus).

38

According to Jesus' interpretation of the meaning of the Sabbath, the Pharisees are the ones who are guilty.

Did the Pharisees really rest on the Sabbath? Was it a time of genuine worship and expressions of the love of God for them?

The Pharisees were the real Sabbath breakers.

They wanted to take the ceremonial rules from the Bible and apply every detail to every nook and cranny of people's lives without any regard for the purpose of the command in their own hearts.

Legalism always loses sight of the meaning of the law.

It would be like if you had a rule in your school – everyone will say the pledge of allegiance with hand over heart. The purpose of the ritual is to engender respect for the flag.

Suppose you had some little legalistic Phariseettes. They would make a big deal about the placement of the hand.

Instead of saying the pledge, they would look around to see if someone had his hand

placed wrong – if a student missed the physiological location of the heart, they might tear the flag off the wall and strangle him with it.

That's what legalism is like.

40

There was a religion of rules only, and so the Sabbath was the epitome of their legalistic system. Everything that was wrong with the Pharisees' religion was summed up in their Sabbath rules, and so Jesus goes after that. Jesus was striking a blow at the heart and soul of their system.

And Jesus couldn't have said anything that would get closer to the heart of the issue than what He said in v.7.

7 If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

Those words are from Hos.6:6.

Just three chapters ago there was a very dramatic incident in which Jesus told them to learn the meaning of Hos.6:6.

The Pharisees had cornered the disciples outside a house while Jesus was inside. They demanded to know why Jesus ignored their rituals.

And before the disciples even have a chance to answer a voice comes from behind the Pharisees that must have rattled them.

Jesus had come out of the house, and caught them trying to accost the disciples, and so He accosts them – kind of like an angry big brother catching a bully beating up on his little brother.

Mt.9:13 **go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'**

Well what does that mean? It means God is concerned with the heart, not with mere externals.

If they would just learn the meaning of that one verse they would understand everything that was wrong with their whole system.

If you are committed to certain procedures and carry them out faithfully, but you don't have love for your fellow man or for God, you have wandered from the truth.

43

Remember Amos 8:4? If you keep the Sabbath but don't show love, then you

are not keeping the Sabbath.

Whenever there is legalism, mercy is always out the window.

You have heard all about the Taliban and AlQuida – who so hate America. And they say the number one reason isn't Israel; it's our immorality. We have movies and TV that are pornographic.

And we hear that and think, "I can't really argue too much with that."

The problem is they are not concerned with purity, but with legalism. And you can tell that by the fact that they are without mercy.

I read this week about the fact that not only did the Taliban prohibit female doctors from practicing, but they also prohibited male doctors from working on women. So you had an entire country in which women couldn't be treated by a doctor for any reason.

45

Do you think the purpose for that was purity and holiness?

From Bob Herbert's editorial in 12-28-2001 Rocky Mt. News: "The doctor I spoke with found himself in very serious trouble a few years ago when he defied the Taliban and treated a woman who was

experiencing dangerous complications while giving birth. His intervention saved the life of the woman and the baby, but it almost cost him his own.

"Under the Taliban rules you can't touch the woman and you can't deliver a baby, even if the woman's life or the baby's life is in danger." he said. "They came to my office and took me to prison."

The doctor, who had been running a clinic outside Kabul, was tortured and kept in solitary confinement. Once day the jailers came to his cell and made him an offer. He would be freed, they said, if he would amputate the hand of another prisoner.

"I refused and they beat me until I lost consciousness," he said. "When I woke up it was made clear to me that these would be the last days of my life. They were going to kill me. But there was some local fighting at that time and by chance a rocket hit the prison I was in.' The prison was partially destroyed and in the ensuing chaos the doctor escaped."

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A focus on rules without any regard for the purpose of God's law is worthless, and you can always spot it

because the legalist has no love in his heart.

When Jesus said **The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath** He connected the Sabbath with the tender heart of God. The Sabbath is for rest – a time for God to express His tender love for us, and a time for us to express our love for Him and for others.

So why weren't we all here yesterday? Why do we treat Saturday as a common day when God said it was to be a sign of an everlasting covenant?

- Did Jesus set aside or abrogate the Sabbath Law? If so, how do we reconcile that with the fact that Jesus said He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it?
- And why do we make such a big deal about the other 9 Commandments, and completely ignore the Sabbath law?
- Are we to keep the Sabbath? (It's one of the 10 Commandments). Ex.31 says it is to be a sign between God and Israel *forever*.

- If so, how? Saturday?
Sunday?

Is there a specific day that we are supposed to celebrate as the Sabbath day? Yes. I believe there is a specific day, but it's not Sunday. And it's not Saturday.

There is something special about next Sunday, however. Because that's the day I'll tell you which day it is.

- cards
- Doughnuts
- SS (Judaism)
- Fellowship meal (sign up)
- New Year's Party
- Keep praying for 10 households
- SS Conv. Feb.7-9

Benediction:

Jesus said: Mt.11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 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. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Mt 11:30 ...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

12:1At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.

2When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

3He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread-which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.

5Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? 6I tell you that one greater than the temple is here.

7If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

8For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

9Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, 10and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"

11He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? 12How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

13Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. 14But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Mk 2:19 "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? ...No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

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

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

25He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26In 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."

27Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

3:1Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath.

3Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

4Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Lk 5:39 And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

6:1One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels.

2Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

3Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

5Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

6On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

8But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

9Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

10He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.