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Jesus Defines the Sabbath

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Mark is the eye-witness reporter who recorded the story of Peter following Jesus through three plus years of incredible ministry!

Jesus is seen transparently in the Gospel by Mark. In the pages of this book we are treated to Jesus weary, Jesus grieved, Jesus sorrowing; in other words we are repeatedly brought face to face with the human emotions of Jesus. And we are witnesses to the astonishment of the multitudes.

Jesus is seen constantly in action in the Gospel by Mark. By Mark's use of the historical present tense at least 150 times in this book we see Jesus always in action. It is: Jesus comes, Jesus says, and Jesus heals—all of these are in the present tense.

Jesus is seen constantly using divine power in the Gospel by Mark. If you look closely you will find that there are more miracles recorded in Mark than in the other Gospels, despite its being far shorter. The style Mark uses in a vivid "Eyewitness News Reporter Format". Mark moves along with a vivid and fast-moving story of Jesus the Powerful Servant.

- In fact, Mark uses the Greek word for "immediately" some forty-two times, while Matthew only has seven occurrences and Luke just one.
- Mark uses the conjunction "and" in an unusually frequent manner. He starts 12 of his 16 chapters with "and" which only adds to the rush of action.
- Mark chronicles Christ's life as what we would call super busy. Jesus is recorded as even having trouble finding time to eat [in 3:20 and 6:31](#).

Mark records Christ using His power as He was showing His authority. You can trace the first two chapters of this Gospel around those demonstrations of Christ's Authority. We have already seen the first 8 in Mark. Do you remember them?

If you have been following along with us these past weeks in our study of the life of Christ, you remember the focus is on Christ's authority as God's servant. (And this morning as Christ's servants, let's acknowledge His authority.)

In ch. 1, we see the 1st six declarations of Christ's authority -

1. v. 9-11 = Christ's authority came from God
 - **He came**
2. v. 12-13 = Christ's authority was over Satan
 - **He conquered**
3. v. 14-15 = Christ's authority to proclaim God's gospel
 - **He declared**
4. v. 21-26 = Christ's authority even over the spirit world and demons
 - **He commanded**
5. v. 29-31 = Christ authority over disease and sickness
 - **He healed**
6. v. 40-42 = Christ's authority over defilement and decay

Part: 5	John the Baptist: He Must Increase
Part: 4	Who Was Mark?
Part: 3	Mining For Gold in the Gospels
Part: 2	Mining For Gold in the Gospels
Part: 1	Walking With Jesus

- He cleansed

Then in chapter two -

7. v. 1-17 = Christ's authority over sin

- He forgave. "He can save, cleanse, keep and He will! God can do anything but fail."

8. v. 18-28 = Christ's authority over tradition

- He explained

As we continue Walking through the Gospel by Mark we will find this morning that Jesus now turns His attention from the Biblical Fasting to the Biblical Purpose of the Sabbath Day. Please follow along as I read [Mark 2:23 -28](#).

- [Mark 2:23-28](#) Now it happened that He went through the grain fields on the Sabbath: and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain.24 And the Pharisees said (**were they hiding in the fields? Were they following them all the time? How did they know?**) to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"25 But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26 "how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?"27 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.28 "Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

Note: It was on the Sabbath! To us that means little or nothing, but in Christ's day, it was everything! Listen to Jewish historians:

The Sabbath was divinely instituted as a sign of the covenant between God and His people Israel ([Exodus 31:13, 17](#)). Its observance marked Israel as a set-apart people.

There was no institution among the Jews regarded with more veneration and scrupulousness than that of the Sabbath. It was a divinely ordained and beneficent part of the Mosaic economy, designed for the rest of man for his worship and service to God. Its purpose was to protect the underlings and oppressed in a nation afflicted with greed. Beginning with sunset on Friday, announced by three trumpet blasts from the Temple and synagogue, it ended at sunset on Saturday. All food must be prepared, all vessels washed, all lights kindled, and all tools laid aside. There were restrictions laid down in the Mosaic Law; but the Rabbis had elaborated from these a vast array of injunctions and prohibitions, making of the Sabbath law a veritable bondage. Moses said, "Thou shalt not do any work."

The Rabbis made out a system of thirty-nine works, which done rendered the offender subject to death by stoning. Derived from these "father-works" were numerous "descendant-works." One of the "father-works" was ploughing; a son of this was "digging." Wearing false teeth was a "descendant" of "carrying a burden." Among the descendants of "reaping" were the "plucking of a head of wheat" or the "pulling out of a gray hair" from one's head. Lengthy rules were formulated about what kinds of knots one might tie on the Sabbath. The camel-driver's and sailor's knots might not be tied or unloosed. Two letters of the alphabet might not be written together. To kindle or extinguish a fire was a great description, not being justified even in case of the emergency of sickness. The Sabbath had become a grievous burden by the thousands of such restriction and rules too numerous to mention.

As you followed along in [Mark 2:23-28](#) let me remind you of the moment in Christ's ministry these event takes place. So much of Bible Study is looking at the context, the frame in which the Holy Spirit chose to direct Christ's Life and Ministry for God's Glory. Our text happens right after our Lord Jesus Christ had just walked north to Galilee from Jerusalem. Those days in Jerusalem are recorded in [John 5:1-47](#).

As we turn there you remember the story, He had healed the paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda who had been sick 38 years. To best see what is going on, please follow along with me through John 5.

After the teachings about fasting we looked at last time, Jesus left Capernaum and traveled south to Jerusalem. Only the Apostle John tells us what happened next. While in Jerusalem Jesus healed the lame man who laid by the Pool of Bethesda for 38 years. But the attention grabber was, that He did that on the Sabbath. Sabbath Day and Christ is our focus of study in God's Word this morning.

John 5 records the halfway mark of Christ's Earthly Ministry. We are midway through the 2nd year of His Three Year Public Ministry. This second year of His ministry, was a year of great public popularity.[1] His fame had grown rapidly in Galilee and the jealousy of the Pharisees was already thoroughly aroused now in all parts of the country north and south. Thus as we study through the next chapters we will see His activity during this year would be intense and His fame was destined to ring through all the land.

Nearly all this second year He ministered in Galilee, but there was a feast, presumably the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, which He attended before returning to Capernaum. Note the event and the response of the religious leaders in this chapter.

[John 5:1-2](#) After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. (**Now this is quite a verse to encourage your conviction is God's Word. This spot was buried for 1,800 years after**

Jerusalem was destroyed, and late in the 19th century it was dug up just where the inspired Word said it was!)

John 5:5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. (**Here was a real test of Christ's power to heal.**)

John 5:9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. 10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed." (**Here was a real test of Christ's power and authority to do so on the Sabbath.**)

John 5:16-18 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on **the Sabbath**.17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke **the Sabbath**, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 5:28 "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice (Now there is a reason to either be very secure or quite insecure; there is no where you can hide or get away from Jesus!)

- **John 5:40** "*But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*" (They were UNRESPONSIVE.)
- **John 5:42** "*But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.*" (They were UNLOVING.)
- **John 5:46** "*For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.*" (They were UNBELIEVING.)
- **John 5:47** "*But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?*" (They were thus UNSAVED.)

So where are we going? Here is our path over the next few weeks:

1. First, SABBATH PURPOSES: what did **Jesus say about the Sabbath**? As Lord of Sabbath He said one thing, the Sabbath was made for man to worship God. It was not a prison, a straight jacket, a death squad to hunt Sabbath breakers, no; it was a delightful offer of spiritual communion with God.
2. Secondly, SABBATH PROMISES: **do we need rest and to cease from our wearying schedules**? Yes, and that is what this Old Testament picture teaches us New Testament saints! God offers rest!
3. Thirdly, SABBATH LAWS: **should we really meet on Sunday** or on the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday? We study that tonight!
4. Fourthly, SABBATH BLESSINGS **how do we apply all this to our lives**? How do we cultivate a rest, a cessation from weariness in our lives? How do we make worship of the Lord special on our Day of Gathering, the Lord's Day? That is next week!
5. Fifthly, SABBATH THIEVES what **takes away the blessings** and promises of the rest God offers? This morning we start this examination of what robs us of the blessings of a personal Sabbath rest.
6. SABBATH PLANS what are **some simply wonderful plans** we can make to heighten our worship, our communion with God? Some real blessings can come with some small changes and some preparations.
7. SABBATH PictureS what are **the illustrations** that Jesus, His apostles, and all the Old Testament saints used to show the plan of God? God's Holidays, the Feasts. And each is a wonderful picture and pathway to deepening our devotion to Jesus..
8. Finally, SABBATH rest what does God want more than anything? Our minds. What is the key to our spiritual success? A mind that rests upon, and is fixed upon the Lord God Almighty!

[1] Drawn from Pentecost, Words and Works of Christ.

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