

# Christ As Lord Of The Sabbath

**Memory Text:** “And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:28, 29)

**Setting The Stage:** Over recent years there has been a growing interest in the Sabbath. Not long ago Christianity Today featured an article listing the contributor’s top five books about the Sabbath with the obvious intent to encourage the reader to reconsider the Sabbath. Senator Joe Lieberman wrote a book entitled, “The Gift Of Rest: Rediscovering The Beauty Of The Sabbath.” And since then there seems to be a flurry of books on the subject.

Despite the likely reason for this having to do more with the fact that we live in a frazzled and frenzied world (The Economist featured an article recently entitled, “Why Is Everyone So Busy?”) and not faithfulness to the Creator and His commandments, the topic has nonetheless been given adequate attention of late.

The gospel according to Luke was written primarily for the Gentiles, and yet it is interesting that he refers to the Sabbath over and over again (this speaks volumes about the Sabbath being for mankind, not merely the Jews). The gospels and Acts together speak about the Sabbath 54 times. Luke mentions it 17 times in his account of Jesus and 9 times in the book of Acts (about half the total), while Matthew and John speak of it 9 times each, and Mark 10 times.

This week’s lesson turns us to Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath, how He observed it, and how He set an example for us to follow. We will be looking at the Sabbath as the seventh day of the week, Saturday, not Sunday as is popularly taught, and discovering that it is one of heaven’s precious gifts to humanity, especially for the last days.

## Sunday – “As His Custom Was”

Luke 4:16

**Luke 4:16.** About half-way through His ministry Jesus returns to His home town. It’s the Sabbath, and according to Luke’s account, it was Jesus custom to go to the synagogue on that day.

“Custom” - Literally, “according to what was customary to Him.” In Luke 22:39 Luke records that before He went to the cross, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives as was His “custom.” It was more than mere tradition that brought Jesus to the synagogue on Sabbath. It wasn’t His custom to attend church on Sabbath as it is a persons custom to visit Dairy Queen on Sunday’s or family’s tradition to do the same

on Friday afternoons during the summer. It was His intentional habit to come into the church of that day to worship God on the Sabbath.

“Synagogue” – Literally, the “assembly” that was the focal point of the Jewish community. It came about during and after the Babylonian captivity. Tradition makes Ezekiel the founder of the synagogue. The Jews were dispersed throughout the world and wherever there was ten adult males a synagogue was to be erected. The affairs of the synagogue and the community attached to it were under the supervision of a board of elders.

More than any other institution, the synagogue served to preserve, religion, culture, and racial consciousness of the Jewish race. The synagogue was never a place where sacrifices were offered, but worship services were held there every Sabbath. During the week it was used as a local law court and as a school. Essentially the synagogue was a place for scriptural instruction and prayer.

**Mark 1:21:** “And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.”

**Luke 6:6:** “And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.”

**Luke 13:10:** “And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.”

Why should we make it our “custom” to go to church on the Sabbath as Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath? 1) As His followers we gladly walk in His steps and are happily obedient (“holy convocation” – Lev. 23:3). 2) There’s something about coming to together as independent family units to unite in God’s house as one family to worship our Heavenly Father. 3) It provides a public opportunity to affirm that God is our Creator and Redeemer. 4) It gives us an opportunity for fellowship, to come together to “exhort” one another (Heb. 10:24, 25).

### **Monday – Sabbath: Its Message & Meaning**

Luke 4:17; Deuteronomy 5:15; Ezekiel 20:12

**Luke 4:17.** Folk who attended the local synagogue in Jesus day expected the word of God to be shared and taught. Coming to church on Sabbath provides attendees to the opportunity to hear the word of God taught and preached. It’s an opportunity to get another perspective, a deeper meaning, and a richer experience from the word of God. After all, God’s people need their minds fortified with it if they ever hope to be successful against the enemies devices. “Your word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (Ps. 119:11)

**Luke 4:18, 19.** Jesus ministry was to set the captives free. Think about how close his role as Messiah is to the Sabbath.

**Exodus 20:2:** “I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Before God issued His law and asks for obedience, He reminds His people that He is their deliver, their emancipator, their liberator. He saved them so they could serve Him. He saved them for obedience, and this how God always works (cp Eph. 2:8-10).

**Deuteronomy 5:15:** “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” This is only a recapitulation of what God already spoke on Sinai in Exodus 20, an effort to instill in their minds God’s leading in their past and His desire for whole-hearted obedience. Their deliverance from Egypt becomes another reason for commitment to God (cp rom. 6:16-18).

**Ezekiel 20:12:** “Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies them.” The Sabbath is not only a memorial of God’s creative acts in the beginning, but also a memorial of His ability to re-create us into the image of God (Ps. 51:10; 2 Cor. 5:17). No wonder Jesus performed many liberating healings over the Sabbath.

Can you imagine how the family felt after they sold a small bowl at their garage sale to a family for \$3, and found out later that they had given away a 1,000 year-old Chinese Ding bowl that was worth over \$2million? Many churchgoers today who chose to by-pass the Sabbath and sell it off as an unimportant day are letting a weekly fortune of benefits and blessings slip between their fingers (see Isa. 58:13, 14)!

**Can faith alone save?** Basically, Jesus alone saves us. He initiated the plan of salvation, came after us to rescue us, lived, suffered, and died for us, etc., however without a faith response from us, all that Jesus has done and is doing will be of no avail. That’s why Paul wrote, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Several times Jesus healed a person and declared that their faith had made them whole. Faith doesn’t save, Jesus does. However, without a response from us Jesus can’t do more for us than He’s already done.

## **Tuesday – Sabbath Healings At Capernaum**

Luke 4:31-37

**Luke 4:31-37.** After being rejected by his town-folk Jesus withdrew Himself and traveled from Nazareth high in the hills (1,144 ft above sea level) down to Capernaum (685 ft below), twenty miles on the Sea of Galilee, “His own city,” where He had been ministering earlier. Being on the highway from Damascus to Jerusalem and Egypt, and to the Mediterranean Sea, it was a terrific thoroughfare of travel, thus being an ideal location for Jesus to minister.

Here He taught the people on the “Sabbaths.” They were more than impressed with what He had to say as He taught with “authority,” not with philosophy or platitudes (see *Desire of Ages*, p. 253, 254). On one particular Sabbath Jesus is confronted by a demon possessed man (it’s always Satan’s objective to bring confusion where the word of God is being preached with power) who declared Jesus to be the incarnate Messiah. Here the great controversy between Christ and Satan is clearly seen. The curtain between the unseen and seen is pulled aside. On our own we are no match for Satan’s power, but in Christ we can be victorious!

**Isaiah 27:5:** “Or let him take hold of My strength, *that* he may make peace with Me; *and* he shall make peace with Me.”

**Isaiah 49:24, 25:** “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of the righteous be delivered? But thus says the LORD: ‘Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible be delivered; for I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children.’”

In Luke’s account of the gospel we have the first recorded Sabbath healing, one of many more to come. The One who came to set the captives free, the One who gave us the Sabbath, a day of rest, brings healing and liberation to prisoners of darkness on the holy day.

### Wednesday – The Lord Of The Sabbath

Luke 6:1-11;

Now we’ll take a look at Christ’s dealing with the religious leaders over the Sabbath. **Luke 6:1-5** (cp Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28). On any other day it would have been fine to rub heads of grain in ones hand to eat the kernels (Deut. 23:24, 25), but according to rabbinical tradition to do so on the Sabbath was considered a desecration of the day (reaping and threshing).

The Mishnah (codified traditional law of the Jews containing rules and regulations pertaining to religion formulated over hundreds of years by the Sanhedrin and famous rabbi’s) lists 39 primary types of labor prohibited on the Sabbath and each are described in further detail. Common among them is the “Sabbath days journey” of 2,000 cu. – less than 2/3 of a mile.

It was also considered Sabbath breaking to look in a mirror hanging on a wall, or even to light a candle. At the same time an egg could be laid on the Sabbath to be sold to a Gentile, and Gentile to be hired to light a candle or fire. It was also unlawful to expectorate (spit) on the ground lest a blade of grass be irrigated. It wasn’t permissible to carry a handkerchief on the Sabbath unless one end of it was sewed to the wearer’s garment, which made it no longer a handkerchief but a part of the garment.

To answer their double charge Jesus refers to the story of David that they should have known (1 Sam. 21:1-6). If it was all right to eat the dedicated bread of the temple then it was fine for the disciples to satisfy their hunger this way over the Sabbath. In Matthews account, Jesus reminds the religious leaders of the weekly Sabbath offerings the priest performed (Num 28:9, 10), which in reality required more effort to perform than any other day of the week. But it was permissible because their work pointed to the redeeming power of Christ and therefore was in harmony with the Sabbath (Matt. 12:6).

“Lord of the Sabbath” – If you were lord over something you own it; it is yours. Jesus is here declaring that He and He alone has the right to determine what’s appropriate to that day. The church has no right to load up the Sabbath with man-made traditions and neither does any institution have the right to transfer the sacredness of the day to another (Dan. 7:25). However, the Bible does encourage us to avoid those things that tend to distract us from giving fully attention and worship to God over the Sabbath (Ex. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; Neh. 13:15-22; Isa. 58:13, 14; Matt. 24:20).

**Luke 6:6-11.** Here Luke’s account of the gospel is the only one that tells us which hand of the man is withered (atrophied or paralyzed) thus revealing the great deal of grief this man has had to go through in life. But the life-giver, the Creator is there to give this man a new hand and by performing this miracle over the Sabbath He answered the question, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good?” with a resounding, “Yes!” Of the 20 specific cases of healing mentioned in the gospels, seven (1/3) of the miracles took place over the Sabbath teaching us that ministering to those who are in need of care falls into harmony with the spirit of the Sabbath.

### **Thursday – The Sabbath: The Sick Versus The Ox And The Donkey**

Luke 13:10-16; 14:1-6

The stories we’re going to take a brief look at are only found in the gospel according to Luke.

**Luke 13:10-16.** She had curvature of the spine and was imprisoned in her crippled body. But Jesus “looses” her (or sets her free to remain free) on the Sabbath. This incites consternation from the synagogue leader because according to tradition only allowance for emergencies not chronic cases could be dealt with. Yet Jesus calls him a hypocrite seeing he cares more about watering his livestock than a human who is in physical pain.

**Luke 14:1-6.** “Dropsy” – a surplus of fluid in the body tissue. Again Jesus reveals that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath by healing the man and then dismisses him before the meal, perhaps to save him the hassle of dealing with the religious hypocrites. In asking the Pharisees if they would rescue their ox on the Sabbath Jesus shows what is really in their hearts – their animals were worth more than human beings.

Some folk have oxen that spend so much time in the ditch, they ought to do something about the ox...or try to fill up the ditch. Try to remove the distractions so that you can use the day to do something positive. God gives us the Sabbath as a day of mercy and ministry, a day of rest and relationships.

**Appeal:** Reminds me of the lady who apparently inherited a very expensive piece of jewelry left to her by a relative. She had no idea what to do with it, didn't want it stolen, and decided to hide it. She opted to put it in the bottom of a bag of dog food. Her dog died. She forgot all about the dog food and the thing she put in there.

One day she was cleaning up. This was a lady who lived in poverty. She was about to throw out that old dog food when something told her not to do it. She hunted through the bag of dog food and found in there the solution to all her financial problems. She was rich and didn't even know it. There was a blessing there, and she had forgotten the blessing. Don't forget the blessing of the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath.