



Christ and the Sabbath

Scripture Readings

- ❖ Matthew 12:1–12
- ❖ Luke 4:16, 31–44
- ❖ John 9:1–38
- ❖ John 5:1–18

Matthew 12:1–12—The disciples plucked ears of corn and ate

- ❖ The charge by the Pharisees—It is not **lawful**—*exestin*—permitted, allowed, free to do. This is not referring to the law in general—*nomos*—that we read about in 1 Timothy 1:8; Galatians 3:24; Romans 2:12, 13

1. THE Sabbath of the Lord, properly kept when the people were devoted to God, was now, in their backslidden condition, buried under the tradition of the rabbis. Certain knots could not be tied or untied; two letters could not be written so as to be read together and so form a word; no more food than the weight of a fig could be carried; fire could neither be kindled nor extinguished; an emetic could not be given, nor a broken bone set, nor a dislocated joint righted; one kind of sandals might be worn, and another kind might not be; one could not lawfully carry a loaf, yet two could. Thus were the people burdened by many foolish restrictions, while the rabbis and priests with subtle casuistry justified actual breaches in God's law of the Sabbath on their own part.

Matthew 12:1–12—Jesus' Response

- ❖ Verses 3, 4—David ate the shewbread—1 Samuel 21:6
- ❖ Verse 5—Priests profane the Sabbath—Numbers 28:9, 10; Exodus 25:30
- ❖ The “shewbread,” or “bread of the Presence,” consisted of 12 loaves, or cakes, which were replaced each Sabbath. The loaves that were removed, being considered holy, were eaten by the priests in the “holy place” (Lev. 24:5–9). These 12 loaves constituted a perpetual thank offering to God from the 12 tribes, for the blessings of life they received from Him daily. In a higher sense, this bread pointed to the spiritual bread, Jesus Christ. (*SDA BC*)

- ❖ Verses 6–8: If the priests were exempt from the restrictions against labor on the Sabbath, how could Jesus, whose house it was—And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. (Matthew 21:13) — and who was therefore “greater than the temple,” be cited for Sabbath-breaking? To the Jews the Temple was more sacred than any other object on earth. Jesus claimed that he was greater than the Temple and “Lord even of the sabbath day.”

Again Christ reiterated the truth that the sacrifices were in themselves of no value. They were a means, and not an end. Their object was to direct men to the Saviour, and thus to bring them into harmony with God. It is the service of love that God values. When this is lacking, the mere round of ceremony is an offense to Him. So with the Sabbath. It was designed to bring men into communion with God; but when the mind was absorbed with wearisome rites, the object of the Sabbath was thwarted. Its mere outward observance was a mockery. (*DA 286.1*)

Matthew 12:10–14—Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?

- ❖ Lawful—It is **lawful**—*exestin*—permitted, allowed, free to do.
- ❖ Upon another Sabbath, as Jesus entered a synagogue, He saw there a man who had a withered hand. The Pharisees watched Him, eager to see what He would do. The Saviour well knew that in healing on the Sabbath He would be regarded as a transgressor, but He did not hesitate to break down the wall of traditional requirements that barricaded the Sabbath. Jesus bade the afflicted man stand forth, and then asked, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?” It was a maxim among the Jews that a failure to do good, when one had opportunity, was to do evil; to neglect to save life was to kill. Thus Jesus met the rabbis on their own ground. “But they held their peace. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.” Mark 3:4, 5. (*DA* 286.2)

When questioned, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?” Jesus answered, “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.” Matthew 12:10–12. (*DA* 286.3)

The spies dared not answer Christ in the presence of the multitude, for fear of involving themselves in difficulty. They knew that He had spoken the truth. Rather than violate their traditions, they would leave a man to suffer, while they would relieve a brute because of the loss to the owner if it were neglected. Thus greater care was shown for a dumb animal than for man, who is made in the image of God. This illustrates the working of all false religions. They originate in man's desire to exalt himself above God, but they result in degrading man below the brute. Every religion that wars against the sovereignty of God defrauds man of the glory which was his at the creation, and which is to be restored to him in Christ. Every false religion teaches its adherents to be careless of human needs, sufferings, and rights. The gospel places a high value upon humanity as the purchase of the blood of Christ, and it teaches a tender regard for the wants and woes of man. The Lord says, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." Isaiah 13:12. (*DA* 286.4)

- ❖ Christ would magnify the law and make it honorable—
Isaiah 41:21
- ❖ In the precepts of His holy law, God has given a perfect rule of life; and He has declared that until the close of time this law, unchanged in a single jot or tittle, is to maintain its claim upon human beings. Christ came to magnify the law and make it honorable. He showed that it is based upon the broad foundation of love to God and love to man, and that obedience to its precepts comprises the whole duty of man. In His own life He gave an example of obedience to the law of God. In the Sermon on the Mount He showed how its requirements extend beyond the outward acts and take cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (AA 505.1)

- ❖ Christ came to fulfill the law—Matthew 5:17, 18; Luke 16:17
- ❖ And Christ Himself says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law. . . . Verily I say unto you”—making the assertion as emphatic as possible—“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Matthew 5:17, 18. Here He teaches, not merely what the claims of God’s law had been, and were then, but that these claims should hold as long as the heavens and the earth remain. The law of God is as immutable as His throne. It will maintain its claims upon mankind in all ages. (*PP* 365.1)

Christ came to vindicate the sacred claims of the law. He came to live a life of obedience to its requirements and thus prove the falsity of the charge made by Satan that it is impossible for man to keep the law of God. As a man He met temptation and overcame in the strength given Him from God. As He went about doing good, healing all who were afflicted by Satan, He made plain to men the character of God's law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God. (8T 207.3)

Never did Christ deviate from loyalty to the principles of God's law. Never did He do anything contrary to the will of His Father. Before angels, men, and demons He could speak words that from any other lips would have been blasphemy: "I do always those things that please Him." John 8:29. Day by day for three years His enemies followed Him, trying to find some stain in His character.

Satan, with all his confederacy of evil, sought to overcome Him; but they found nothing in Him by which to gain advantage. Even the devils were forced to confess: "Thou art the Holy One of God." (8T 208.1)

- ❖ Matthew 5:19, 20—least
- ❖ That is, he shall have no place therein. For he who willfully breaks one commandment, does not, in spirit and truth, keep any of them. “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10. It is not the greatness of the act of disobedience that constitutes sin, but the fact of variance from God’s expressed will in the least particular; for this shows that there is yet communion between the soul and sin. The heart is divided in its service. There is a virtual denial of God, a rebellion against the laws of His government. (*MB* 51.2, .3)

- ❖ Matthew 19:17—if thou wilt enter into life
- ❖ The obedience of Christ to His Father was the same obedience that is required of man. Man cannot overcome Satan's temptations without divine power to combine with his instrumentality. So with Jesus Christ; He could lay hold of divine power. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's holy law, and in this way He is our example. The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency. Man is, through faith, to be a partaker in the divine nature, and to overcome every temptation wherewith he is beset. (Manuscript 1 1892, par, 23, 24)

- ❖ John 15:10—kept his Father’s commandments
- ❖ All who would be sons and daughters of God must prove themselves co-workers with God and Christ and the heavenly angels. This is the test for every soul. Of those who faithfully serve Him the Lord says, “They shall be Mine. . . in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Malachi 3:17. (*COL* 283.1)
- ❖ God’s great object in the working out of His providences is to try men, to give them opportunity to develop character. Thus He proves whether they are obedient or disobedient to His commands. Good works do not purchase the love of God, but they reveal that we possess that love. If we surrender the will to God, we shall not work in order to earn God’s love. His love as a free gift will be received into the soul, and from love to Him we shall delight to obey His commandments. (*COL* 283.2)

- ❖ 1 Peter 2:22—he did no sin
- ❖ Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled. He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. (AA 570.1)

- ❖ Matthew 12:8—Lord of the Sabbath day
- ❖ It is the service of love that God values. When this is lacking, the mere round of ceremony is an offense to Him. So with the Sabbath. It was designed to bring men into communion with God; but when the mind was absorbed with wearisome rites, the object of the Sabbath was thwarted. Its mere outward observance was a mockery. (*DA* 286.1)

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- ❖ Luke 13:10–17—healing on the Sabbath day
- ❖ Christ, during His earthly ministry, emphasized the binding claims of the Sabbath; in all His teaching He showed reverence for the institution He Himself had given. In His days the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of God. Christ set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. Although followed with merciless hostility by the rabbis, He did not even appear to conform to their requirements, but went straight forward keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God. (*PK 183.1*)

December 25, 1865, I was shown that there has been too much slackness in regard to the observance of the Sabbath. There has not been promptness to fulfill the secular duties within the six working days which God has given to man and carefulness not to infringe upon one hour of the holy, sacred time which He has reserved to Himself. There is no business of man's that should be considered of sufficient importance to cause him to transgress the fourth precept of Jehovah. There are cases in which Christ has given permission to labor even on the Sabbath in saving the life of men or of animals. But if we violate the letter of the fourth commandment for our own advantage from a pecuniary point of view we become Sabbathbreakers and are guilty of transgressing all the commandments, for if we offend in one point we are guilty of all. (1T 531.2)

If in order to save property we break over the express command of Jehovah, where is the stopping place? Where shall we set the bounds? Transgress in a small matter, and look upon it as no particular sin on our part, and the conscience becomes hardened, the sensibilities blunted, until we can go still further and perform quite an amount of labor and still flatter ourselves that we are Sabbathkeepers, when, according to Christ's standard, we are breaking every one of God's holy precepts. There is a fault with Sabbathkeepers in this respect; but God is very particular, and all who think that they are saving a little time, or advantaging themselves by infringing a little on the Lord's time, will meet with loss sooner or later. He cannot bless them as it would be His pleasure to do, for His name is dishonored by them, His precepts lightly esteemed. God's curse will rest upon them, and they will lose ten or twentyfold more than they gain. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me, . . . even this whole nation." (1T 531.2)

God has given man six days in which to work for himself, but He has reserved one day in which He is to be specially honored. He is to be glorified, His authority respected. And yet man will rob God by stealing a little of the time which the Creator has reserved for Himself. God reserved the seventh day as a period of rest for man, for the good of man as well as for His own glory. He saw that the wants of man required a day of rest from toil and care, that his health and life would be endangered without a period of relaxation from the labor and anxiety of the six days. (1T 532.1)

The Sabbath was made for the benefit of man; and to knowingly transgress the holy commandment forbidding labor upon the seventh day is a crime in the sight of heaven which was of such magnitude under the Mosaic law as to require the death of the offender. But this was not all that the offender was to suffer, for God would not take a transgressor of His law to heaven. He must suffer the second death, which is the full and final penalty for the transgressor of the law of God. (1T 533.1)

- ❖ Matthew 12:12—it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days
- ❖ Your work being always urgent, it is difficult for you to secure time for meditation and prayer; but this you must not fail to do. The blessing of Heaven, obtained by daily supplication, will be as the bread of life to your soul and will cause you to increase in spiritual and moral strength, like a tree planted by the river of waters, whose leaf will be always green, and whose fruit will appear in due time. (*CH 368.1*)
- ❖ Your neglect to attend the public worship of God is a serious error. The privileges of divine service will be as beneficial to you as to others and are fully as essential. You may be unable to avail yourself of these privileges as often as do many others. You will frequently be called, upon the Sabbath, to visit the sick, and may be obliged to make it a day of exhausting labor. Such labor to relieve the suffering was pronounced by our Saviour a work of mercy and no violation of the Sabbath. But when you regularly devote your Sabbaths to writing or labor, making no special change, you harm your own soul, give to others an example that is not worthy of imitation, and do not honor God. (*CH 368.2*)

- ❖ Luke 13:10–17—healing on the Sabbath day
- ❖ Christ was bound up in all branches of the work. He did not make any division. He did not feel that he was infringing on physicians when He healed the sick. He proclaimed the truth, and when the sick came to Him for healing, He asked them if they believed that He could make them whole. He was just as ready to lay His hands in healing on the sick and afflicted as He was to preach the gospel. He was just as much at home in this work as in proclaiming the truth; for healing the sick is a part of the gospel. (*MM* 237.6)
- ❖ To take people right where they are, whatever their position, whatever their condition, and help them in every way possible—this is gospel ministry. It may be necessary for ministers to go into the homes of the sick and say, “I am ready to help you, and I will do the best I can. I am not a physician, but I am a minister, and I like to minister to the sick and afflicted.” Those who are sick in body are nearly always sick in soul, and when the soul is sick, the body is made sick.—Manuscript 62, 1900. (*MM* 238.1)

Scripture Readings

- ❖ Matthew 12:1–12
- ❖ Luke 4:16, 31–44
- ❖ John 9:1–38 (vs. 14, 16, 34–38)
- ❖ John 5:1–18 (vs. 9, 15–17)

When We Worship On the Sabbath Day

Christ has said: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20. Wherever there are as many as two or three believers, let them meet together on the Sabbath to claim the Lord’s promise.

The little companies assembled to worship God on His holy day have a right to claim the rich blessing of Jehovah. They should believe that the Lord Jesus is an honored guest in their assemblies. Every true worshiper who keeps holy the Sabbath should claim the promise: “That ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.” Exodus 31:13. (6T 360.2–3)

All heaven is keeping the Sabbath, but not in a listless, do-nothing way. On this day every energy of the soul should be awake, for are we not to meet with God and with Christ our Saviour? We may behold Him by faith. He is longing to refresh and bless every soul.

Everyone should feel that he has a part to act in making the Sabbath meetings interesting. You are not to come together simply as a matter of form, but for the **interchange** of thought, for the relation of your **daily experiences**, for the expression of **thanksgiving**, for the utterance of your sincere desire for **divine enlightenment**, that you may know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. Communing together in regard to Christ will **strengthen the soul** for life's trials and conflicts. Never think that you can be Christians and yet withdraw yourselves within yourselves. Each one is a part of the great web of humanity, and the experience of each will be largely determined by the experience of his associates. (6T 362.1–2)

The place of worship may be very humble, but it is no less acknowledged by God. To those who worship God in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness **it will be as the gate of heaven.** The company of believers may be few in number, but in God's sight they are very precious. By the cleaver of truth they have been taken as rough stones from the quarry of the world and have been brought into the workshop of God to be hewed and shaped. But even in the rough they are precious in the sight of God. The ax, the hammer, and the chisel of trial are in the hands of One who is skillful; they are used, not to destroy, but to work out the perfection of every soul. As precious stones, polished after the similitude of a palace, God designs us to find a place in the heavenly temple. (6T 363.2)

God's appointments and grants in our behalf are without limit.

The throne of grace is itself the highest attraction because occupied by One who permits us to call Him Father. But God did not deem the principle of salvation complete while invested only with His own love. By His appointment He has placed at His altar an Advocate clothed with our nature. *As our Intercessor, His office work is to introduce us to God as His sons and daughters.*

Christ intercedes in behalf of those who have received Him. To them He gives power, by virtue of His own merits, to become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. And the Father demonstrates His infinite love for Christ, who paid our ransom with His blood, by receiving and welcoming Christ's friends as His friends. He is satisfied with the atonement made. He is glorified by the incarnation, the life, death, and mediation of His Son. (6T 363.3)

The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God. (6T 366.1)

Oh, that we could all realize the nearness of heaven to earth!
When the earthborn children know it not, they have angels of light as their companions. A silent witness guards every soul that lives, seeking to draw that soul to Christ. As long as there is hope, until men resist the Holy Spirit to their eternal ruin, they are guarded by heavenly intelligences. Let us all bear in mind that in every assembly of the saints below are angels of God, listening to the testimonies, songs, and prayers. Let us remember that our praises are supplemented by the choirs of the angelic host above.
(6T 366.1)