

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

SABBATH CONTROVERSY

PART 6

All in a day's work

READ MATTHEW 12:1-8

INTRODUCTION

It is key to remember that, during Jesus' day specifically, the Jewish leaders were very concerned with keeping all facets of the law. When we think of "the law", often we think of the ten commandments and that is correct. For the Jews however, the law consisted of not only the ten commandments but also another additional 600+ commands that were created to try and follow the ten commandments more closely as well as practical and judicial laws. This resulted in extreme legalism from the spiritual leaders of the day because there were high expectations of what a person "obeying the law" looked like.

This led to even more man made "rules" being created on how a person was to follow. There were laws that dealt with how far one could walk away from their houses on the Sabbath and that led to men creating more and more loopholes to try and get around the law. (Remember, these were man's laws and not God's) They would tie ropes around entire villages because, if you had a rope attached to the front post of your house, everything that the rope encircled was considered your house. So, not only did they make a law that wasn't really from God but, they also found a way to bend the intention of that rule so they could still travel.

Here in Matthew, we see Jesus call them out on the hypocrisy of their actions, including the work that the priests did on the Sabbath in sacrificing for the people. (Starting a fire to do a burnt offering counted as work, which was not allowed on the Sabbath) There may have been good intentions but it led to legalism. Jesus explains in verses 7 and 8 that He desires mercy more than sacrifice. It would be better to serve the needs of the people and show mercy to people than to condemn them for small infractions on man made laws. Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath. That means that we are no longer bound to the tradition and law of the day but that we recognize He gives us our peace and that peace and rest lasts all day, every day.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think people wanted to create more laws on top of the already impossible to keep ten commandments? What purpose were those extra laws intended to fulfil?
2. Do Christians still make extra rules for people today? Does this lead to life or death? Is it mercy or is it legalism? Why or why not?
3. What is the difference between a law and a personal conviction? How should we present a personal conviction to someone else versus a law?
4. Are there laws that God has given to us that we still try to “bend”? Why do we do it? Is there a good way to break ourselves of the habit?
5. What does the phrase in verse 7 mean? What are the differences between mercy and sacrifice? What does it mean that Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath? What is the encouragement about that truth?

WRAP UP

It is amazing to see a person go from law to grace. The change is spectacular and it is like watching someone come to life. We need to be cautious that we do not fall into a place where we are legalistic in our interpretation of God's Word and that we show mercy and grace to others. This makes us uncomfortable sometimes but, when we follow the Lord, sometimes His very intention is that we get a little uncomfortable so that He can grow us closer to Him.