

2/4/18

Legalism Or God's Word?

Matt. 12:1-8

The unbelief and rejection of Jesus by the people has now grown to open confrontation of that will only keep growing until they crucify Him.

Jesus has exposed the Pharisees for what they were on the Sermon on the Mount, as ritualistic ceremonial hypocrites loving the praises of man.

* The keep verse being, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:20

We want to look at the accusation of the Pharisees that the disciples were breaking the Sabbath law as they plucked wheat to eat, which consist of three movements. Matt. 12:1-8

- I. The accusation about breaking the Sabbath. vs. 1-2
- II. The clarification about breaking the Sabbath. vs. 3-5
- III. The illumination about the Sabbath. vs. 6-8

I. The accusation about breaking the Sabbath. vs. 1-2

- A. The occasion is described vividly. vs. 1

1. The time is simply indicated by the phrase, "At that time". vs. 1a
 - a. The particular time is after Jesus had departed to teach and preach in the cities of the Jews in Galilee. Matt. 11:1
 - 1) Jesus had commissioned the twelve.
 - 2) Jesus said He would meet them before they had gone through the cities of Israel. Matt. 10:23
 - 3) Jesus is now back with His disciples.
 - b. The time also indicates the growing hostility towards Jesus.
 - 1) In chapter eleven the opposition was in unbelief and rejection.
 - 2) Now in chapter twelve the opposition is confrontational and more hostile.
2. The particular occasion is stated, "Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath." vs. 1a
 - a. Remember Matthew is not concerned with the chronology.
 - 1) Parallel text. Mk. 2:23-28; Lk. 6:1-5
 - 2) Luke says it was the second Sabbath after the first. Lk. 6:1
 - b. The grainfield "sporimon", a wheatfield.
 - 1) They were walking through the paths between the stocks on their way to the synagogue. Matt. 12:9
 - 2) The wheat around Capernaum was ripe in March, harvested in May before the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost.

- c. The day is the Sabbath “sabbaton”.
 - 1) The seventh day of the week that all were to rest abstaining from all labor.
 - 2) Even walking was limited to a little more than half a mile.
 - 3) Thirty times the word “Sabbath” appears in the first five books.
 - 4) The Sabbath was holy to be observed as one of the Ten Commandments.
Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14
 - 5) Violators were put to death. Ex. 31:14-15; Num. 15:32-35
- 2. The particular problem was the actions of the disciples of Jesus in the wheatfield. vs. 1b-c
 - a. As they were walking through the field Matthew says, “And His disciples were hungry.” vs. 1b
 - 1) They probably had been hour since they ate.
 - 2) They would naturally desire to satisfy their human need.
 - b. So the disciples took advantage of being in a wheatfield, “And began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.” vs. 1c
 - 1) They plucked “eillo” to tear off some wheat from the stock.
 - 2) Then rub the wheat between their hands to break the husk off and eat the wheat.

- B. The objection came from the religious rulers. vs. 2
 - 1. The specific group is indicated, “And when the Pharisees saw *it*.” vs. 2a
 - a. The Pharisees “Pharisaioi” and means the separated ones.
 - 1) They started after the Jewish exile of Babylon as the caretakers of the Law to make sure no one violated it and there were no more than 6,000 at any one time.
 - 2) They codified the law in the Mishnah and their commentaries explained the Mishnah called the Talmuds, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud.
 - 4) The law was turned into 613 commandments, 248 positive and 265 negative.
 - 5) Jesus had exposed their ignorance of the true meaning of the law, as they quoted the elders, “You have heard that it was said”, then Jesus gave the proper interpretation, “I say to you.”
 - b. The Pharisees “saw it”, literally, “having seen”.
 - 1) They were always looking to see who they could find violating the law, according to their understanding.
 - 2) They were the legalist, self-righteous men of Israel.

2. The Pharisees confronted Jesus about His disciples. vs. 2b-d
 - a. They confronted Jesus knowing they were His disciples, “they said to Him.” vs. 2b
 - 1) They said Jesus blasphemed when He forgave the sins of the paralytic. Matt. 8:2-3
 - 2) They objected to Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners at the house of Matthew to announce he was following Jesus. Matt. 9:11
 - b. They declared their accusation, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” vs. 2c-d
 - 1) The accusation was false, it was not based on the law, but their traditions, they even had about 39 categories of work prohibited, that often were contrary to God’s word. Matt. 5-7
 - 2) The law permitted what Jesus and the disciples had done as they walked through the field, as long as they did not take a sickle to it and carry it out, “When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.” Deut. 23:25
 - 3) According to them to rub the wheat between their fingers, brake of the

husk was threshing and constituted work on the Sabbath.

Illustration

Extreme Pentecostals teach that the Bible teaches it is wrong for a woman to wear pant, but the context is if she is attempting to impersonate a man.

Application

1. There are still people that believe the Sabbath should be kept by Christians.
 - a. The Seventh Day Adventist teach this, but they do not keep it Scripturally.
 - b. For the Sabbath is not Saturday, but it begins on Friday sundown till Saturday sundown, a covenant for the Jews only. Ex. 31:16
 - c. God created the heavens and the earth in six day and the seventh He rested, so everyone should take at least one day off of week to refresh and replenish the physical, mental and spiritual well being.
 - * “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a **new moon** or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Col. 2:16-17
2. There are others that have “holiness rules” as a demonstration of their self-righteousness.
 - a. They love religious rituals and if you do not do certain things according to traditional formality, they say it displeases God.

- b. Some believe if you use a guittar or any other instrument except a church organ, the worship is dishonoring God.
 - c. Other believe if you a man has long hair or a Pastor does not wear a suit on Sunday it is sin.
 - d. Some believe if a woman wears the latest fashion, nice hair or paints her nail, it is sin.
 - e. Certainly a woman must be discrete in her dress to not flaunt herself or stumble others, this goes without saying, but to dress nice is not sin, just the envy and self-righeousness of others.
- * “One person esteems *one day* above another; another esteems every *day alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the *day*, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the *day*, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.” Rom. 14:5-6

The accusation about the Sabbath was based on their legal traditions!

II. The clarification about the Sabbath. vs. 3-5

- A. Jesus confronted the Pharisees with the case of David that clearly contradicted their demands. vs. 3
 - 1. Jesus knowing their self-righteous attitude quickly responded in defense of His

disciples by taking them back to the Scriptures, “But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him.” vs. 3

- a. The occasion was when David was fleeing from Saul and he lied to Ahimelech the priest that he was on a secret mission for the king. 1Sam. 21:1-6
 - b. Ahimelech the priest said he did not have any common bread, but there was the holy bread to be replace and if David and his men had kept themselves from women they could have it.
2. The key is that David and his men were “hungry”, just like Jesus and His disciples.
 - a. There is no sin in being hungry.
 - b. The human need rose above any ritual or religious ceremony.
- B.** Jesus declared plainly that David and his men both ate the bread in the tabernacle they had no right to eat. vs. 4
1. Jesus stated the breaking of the prohibition, “how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat.” vs. 4a
 - a. The showbread “paniyim” in Hebrew means bread of the face. Num. 4:7
 - 1) The bread was placed on the table to the right of entering the tabernacle.

- 2) The bread faced the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat were, a picture of the throne of God in heaven.
- 3) Jesus said He was the bread come down from heaven, the One who was face to face with God before the Incarnation. Jn. 6:41; Jn. 1:1, 14
- b. The bread was affirmed as unlawful “ou exesti” not permitted for the common person.
 - 1) David was not a priest, but a worrier of God having no right to eat the bread.
 - 2) David was a man after God’s heart and God had rejected Saul and chosen David to replace Saul as King.
 - 3) David knew he was going to be the next King of Israel.
- 2. Jesus equally stated that the men also were prohibited from eating the bread, “nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?” vs. 4b
 - a. The men were common warrior as David.
 - 1) David and his men were being accused falsely by Saul, like the disciples were being accused falsely the Pharisees.
 - 2) David and his men were merely attempting to satisfy their hunger, as David and his men.

- b. The priest knew the prohibition, yet they recognized that human life had a greater value than ceremonial law or ritual.
 - 1) The priest only could place the two stacks of six flat breads on the table to the right at the entrance of the tabernacle. Lev. 24:8
 - 2) The priest would change them at the end of the week and eat the old bread. Lev. 24:9
- C. Jesus confronted the Pharisees with a second case, the priest that served in the temple. vs. 5
 - 1. Jesus revealed the priest in the service of God broke the Sabbath law by again taking them back to the Scriptures, “Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?” vs. 5
 - a. The temple “hieron” indicates the entire complex the priest occupied and did their service to God in the precinct.
 - 1) The priests would do double work offering two lambs, along with their drink offerings. Num. 28:9-10
 - 2) The priest would place the bread for the memorial every Sabbath. Lev. 24:8
 - 3) The priest would offer drink offerings, circumcise male infants and many

- other things in the service of the tabernacle and the temple.
- b. The priest in spite of the service being offered were blameless.
 - 1) The word blameless “anatos”, means guiltless or innocent.
 - 2) Why? What was the reason? They were doing the work of God, as service unto God.
 - 3) Likewise the disciples were serving God.

Illustration

Much of the problems in our nation could be cleared up, if we believed and applied the founder’s principles to our Republic, to silence those wanting to destroy the Republic.

Application

* Jesus has just given the invitation to be a disciple of His to find rest for their souls. Matt. 11:28-30

1. He excludes no one, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” vs. 28
 - a. The labor and heavy laden refers to the hardship and destruction of sin on a person.
 - b. The promise in response to the invitation is rest “anopauo”, a ceasing and refreshing from a life dominated by sin by repentance.
2. He expects all to grow spiritually, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and

lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” vs. 29

- a. His yoke is His will revealed in His word to become more like Him through study of the word.
- b. The reason is given, “for I am gentle and lowly in heart.” vs. 29b
 - 1) The word gentle “proaous”, means mild, meek, the idea being compassionate pitying lost man, Jesus came to save man from his sins, not to condemn. Jn. 3:16
 - 2) The word lowly “tapeinos”, means humble in heart “kardia” denotes the center of all physical and spiritual life, in contrast to man, “above all things is deceitful and desperately wicked.” Jer. 17:9
- c. The promise, “And you will find rest for your souls.” vs. 29c
 - 1) The word souls “psuche” refers to the seat of our emotions, intellect and will, agreeing with His word.
 - 2) The word find “heurisko”, means to come upon after searching the thing sought, peace with God as a disciple lives out his life of easy or difficulty with the peace of God.
3. The personal experience to live as a disciple of Jesus, “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” vs. 30
 - a. The yoke of Jesus being easy “chrestos”, means to fit and be useful with the idea of good and

virtuous, wholesome, as a disciple in submission to the love and goodness of God.

- 1) The yoke had to fit the ox perfect so as not to injure his neck and sholders, Jesus a carpenter was keenly aware of this.
 - 3) The demands of a godly life are accompanied with the ability to obey by the Holy Spirit, having love for Jesus.
- b. The burden of Jesus being light refers to the demands of His word to obey, it is light.
- 1) The word light “elephros” simply means ligh weight, not a heavy burden like the demands of the Pharisees and Scribes.
 - 2) The law accuses us as guilty, we are incapable of obeying perfectly.

The clarification about the Sabbath was based on their Scriptural history!

III. The illumination about the Sabbath. vs. 6-8

- A. Jesus declared He was superior to the temple, “Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple.” vs. 6
1. The authority is the highest, His own “Yet I say to you.”
 - a. The authority of the Pharisees was based on man’s traditions.
 - 1) Earthly.
 - 2) Temporal.
 - 3) Self-serving.

- b. The authority of Jesus was based on the revelation of His word.
- 1) Heavenly.
 - 2) Eternal.
 - 3) Serving man.
2. The revelation stated, “that in this place there is One greater than the temple”.
- a. Jesus made very clear He was speaking about Himself.
- 1) The word *One* is in italic to indicate it is not found in the original Greek.
 - 2) Literally it says, “a greater is here”
 - 3) The word greater “meizon”, means more or larger “in this place”.
 - 4) He was God dwelling in His temple, His human body, allowing His disciples to eat. Jn. 2:19
- b. The comparison is to the temple.
- 1) Jesus, the One they were accusing of breaking the Sabbath was the very one who gave the pattern for the pattern of the tabernacle and temple and sanctified them both.
 - 2) Jesus was the One the tabernacle and temple in types and shadows of Him.
 - 3) Jesus was the One worshipped in the Tabernacle and temple.
 - 4) Jesus was to become the High Priest for all who believed in Him, as the Messiah and Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. Jn. 1:29

5) Jesus was serving the Father to reconcile sinners to Himself.

B. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their lack of knowledge of the word. vs. 7

1. Jesus pointed out their ignorance about the heart of God, “But if you had known what *this* means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’” vs. 7a
 - a. The word but “de” marked the sharp contrast, being religious but not spiritual.
 - 1) They loved their traditions more than the word of God.
 - 2) They respected their own authority over the authority of God’s word.
 - b. They failed to understand that the word of God revealed the heart of God.
 - 1) The word known “ginosko”, means to perceive with comprehensive understanding God’s heart of compassion.
 - * The past perfect makes it an unreality in them.
 - 2) Mercy “eleos” means kindness and pity, the sacrifice of a true heart of compassion, not a mere sacrifice.
 - 3) The quotation is from Hosea and the context is God’s compassion over Ephraim unfaithfulness, not wanting to judge her. Hos. 6:6

- 4) The wife of Hosea had become a prostitute and ended up in the slave market and God called Hosea to buy his wife and reconciled her to himself.
- 5) He was to do this and forgive her in order to demonstrate the love of God for Israel who had gone a whoring after other gods, but God would have compassion and mercy over her.
- 3) Jesus quoted the same verse to the Pharisee when they faulted Him for eating with sinners and tax-collectors, “But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Matt, 9:13
2. Jesus accused the Pharisees of their sin, “you would not have condemned the guiltless.” vs. 7b
 - a. Jesus declared it in the negative, emphasizing their sin.
 - 1) The Pharisees had condemned the disciples and Jesus for breaking the Sabbath falsely.
 - 2) The word condemned “katadikazo”, means to give judgment against and pronounce guilty.
 - b. Jesus gave the correct verdict over the disciples, “guiltless”.
 - 1) The word guiltless “anaitos”, means innocent, without fault.

- 2) They were merely eating being hungry in their service with God.

C. Jesus proclaimed He was the ultimate authority over the Sabbath, “For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” vs. 8

1. The word Lord “kurios” is at the beginning of the sentence making it emphatic.
 - a. Jesus is the Master of the Sabbath day.
 - b. Jesus is the ultimate authority about the Sabbath.

* Mark tells us Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Mk. 2:27

2. The authority being confined was as “the Son of Man.”
 - a. The Incarnate God became man according to the Scriptures. Gen. 3:15; Jn. 1:1, 14
 - b. The faithful promise of God kept, being 100% God and 100% man.
 - 1) Conceived by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) Born of a virgin.
 - 3) According to the prophecies. Gen. 3:15; Is. 7:14; Mic. 5:2
 - 4) The Servant of Yahweh in five Servant Song passages. Is. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12

Illustration

A Peanuts cartoon pictured Lucy and Linus looking out the window at a steady downpour of rain.

“Boy,” said Lucy, “Look at it rain. What if floods the whole world?”

“It will never do that,” Linus replied confidently. “In the ninth chapter of Genesis, God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow.”

“You’ve taken a great load off my mind,” said Lucy with a relieved smile.

“Sound theology,” pontificated Linus, “has a way of doing that!” **Green:113**

Application

1. Some times a person will says, “Do you believe in the Ten Commandments? Yes!
 - a. Then they say, then why don’t you keep the Sabbath day?
 - b. Because as we have pointed out Jesus fulfilled all the ceremonial law and it is an eternal covenant for Israel alone.
 - c. I keep the other nine because they have to do with morality and ethics, the worship and honor of God, the honor of parents, respect of life, the sanctity of marriage, the right to private property and to guard my heart against coventing. Ex. 20; Deut. 5
 - * “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, “Teacher, which *is* the great **commandment** in the law?” Jesus said to him,” “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” “This is

the first and great **commandment**. “And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Matt. 22:35-40

2. Jesus is our Sabbath rest, we rest in Him.
 - a. Jesus fulfilled the law making the payment for the sins of the world.
 - b. Jesus is able to save the worst of sinners.
 - c. Jesus invites all to repent and enter His rest.
 - * “For he who has entered His **rest** has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His.” Heb. 4:10
3. People that place their traditions higher than God’s word are attempting to establish their own righteousness apart from Christ.
 - a. “Yet indeed I also **count all** things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of **all** things, and **count** them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Phil. 3:8-11
 - b. “Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, “Why do

Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the **commandment** of God because of your tradition?” Matt. 15:1-3

The illumination about the Sabbath was a blow to their legalism!

Conclusion

The accusation of the Pharisees that the disciple were breaking the Sabbath law as they plucked wheat to eat consisted of these three movements.

- I. The accusation about breaking the Sabbath was based on their legal traditions!
- II. The clarification about the Sabbath was based on their Scriptural history!
- III. The illumination about the Sabbath was a blow to their legalism!