

The Gospel of Luke

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath: Scripture vs. Tradition

Luke 6:1-5¹

Suggested Memory Verse: Isaiah 64:4

1. The Setting (v.1)

Sabbath observance was the established weekly reminder of God's covenant with Israel (Ex 20:8-11). In addition to Jesus twice cleansing the temple of the money changers (John 2:11-12; Matt 21:17-23), many confrontations between Jesus and the religious leaders took place on the Sabbath day (cf. Luke 4:16; 6:2, 6-7; 13:10; 14:1)

2. Jesus is Accused of Sin (v.2)

A. The Law According to Scripture (Ex 20:8-11)

The Sabbath was to be a day set apart from the other days of the week as a holy convocation (Lev 23:3) of complete rest (cf. Ex 35:2-3) from all work for all people and animals. It was to be observed year round (cf. Ex 34:21), and there were stiff penalties if it was not observed (Ex 31:15; 2 Chron 36:20-21).

B. The Law According to Tradition

The Sabbath laws of tradition, which the Pharisees took great pride in observing, extended the explicit Biblical principle and examples into a myriad of specific applications. Violating any of these traditional applications was seen as a violation of the command of God. The religiously devout went to great lengths in order to not violate these rules.

3. Jesus Justifies His Actions (vs.3-4; Matt 12:3-8)

Not all activities that could be construed as 'work' are restricted on the Sabbath.

A. Acts of Necessity (Luke 6:3-4; cf. 1 Sam 21:3-6)

B. Acts of Worship (Matt 12:5-6)

C. Acts of Mercy (Luke 14:5; Matt 12:7)

4. The Purpose of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27)

The Sabbath was made for man, but man was not made for the Sabbath. With this understanding in mind, proper application of the fourth commandment becomes clearer.

5. The Lord of the Sabbath (v.6)

Jesus now explicitly claims to have all authority to determine what is and is not acceptable behavior on the Sabbath, and in doing so makes a clear claim of deity.

¹ Parallel gospel accounts for this passage can be found in Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28.