

Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath (and everything else) John 5:1-18

Last week we saw that God's gift of faith is not based upon who we think we are, or who we think we're not. It's a gift of grace that does not discriminate!

Jesus was/still is doing a miraculous work of redemption, but **what often gets in the way are the religious structures that we ourselves create!**

Worship services, denominations, doctrine, churches, etc. – these are all religious structures that we affiliate ourselves with! But the question is, **“Are they helping or hurting the cause of Christ - past, present, and future?”**

Religious structures can either be stepping stones, or stumbling blocks! They can either assist, or hinder, people's response to Jesus & the gospel!

Has God's people ever taken something that God intended as a gift, and turned it into an obstacle/obstruction for others?

John 5:1-18 - reveals such an example in the history of God's people!

The Sabbath was a gift of God to man, but it became in the hands of the “religious”, a structure that took away from the even greater gifts of God!

What is the Sabbath? The Bible describes it as a day that is set aside to the Lord, as well as a day each week for God's people to rest from their labors!

Exodus 20:8-11 & Deuteronomy 5:12-15 reveal these truths to us!

God's Word not only gives us the command, but also 2 illustrations as to why

- 1) **God's work at creation** - **“For in 6 days the Lord made heaven and earth... and rested on the 7th day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” Exodus 20**

God was establishing a rhythm for our lives - A rhythm of rest!

- 2) God's work in the exodus – **“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, & the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand & outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” Deut. 5:15**

God is reminding us that He is a God who provides! We sometimes forget!

What a gift of God Sabbath is – a way to establish a healthy rhythm in life

that includes rest. And a way to be reminded that God is our great provider!

But what did God's people do in the receiving of this precious gift from Him? **They made it into a stumbling block that diverted our attention!**

God's people took this gift, described so clearly & simply in both Exodus & Deuteronomy, & they turned it into hundreds/thousands of rules & regulations that by Jesus' day were summarized into 39 official Sabbath laws

A day, originally intended to be a time to focus on God and to rest, had become a day focused on rule following & regulation keeping!

The Sabbath had become a religious structure that bred idolatry rather than the true worship of God!

Example A: **Jesus heals a man who was lame for 38 years & all God's people could talk about was that it happened on the Sabbath.**

- How could it be that on a day specifically set aside for the Lord, that God's people completely missed His very presence/power/purpose in their midst?
- **How could it be that on a day set aside for rest, that God's people were trying to inhibit this man from truly experiencing rest**, after 38 years of pain, rejection, and paralysis?
- **How could it be that in a place called “Bethesda”, which means a house of mercy, that their focus would be on making accusations and stifling this act of mercy by Jesus to this man in need?**

We may shake our heads and ask, “What's wrong with them?” But I wonder if we are really any different today? **How often do our religious structures breed the same outcome of taking God's gifts & building barriers with them?**

- Have we built religious structures that are hurting rather than helping?
- Have we become stumbling blocks to the advancement of the gospel?
- **Do we focus more on our own self-made structures than we do on Jesus?**

Yes, we're still called to keep the Sabbath holy by resting & seeking the Lord! May we never miss what Jesus is doing in our day, b/c our focus is misplaced!

As important as honoring the Sabbath is, Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, & He never let the religious structures of the day inhibit Him & His purpose!

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