

# Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath



## SABBATH—APRIL 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Mark 1:21; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:17–19, 31–37; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Luke 6:1–11; Luke 13:10–16.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath day. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day’ ” (Mark 2:27, 28, NIV).

### DEFINITIONS

1. false prophet—someone who claims to have a special message from God for His people. But the message turns out to be false or does not come true.

**LUKE WROTE HIS GOSPEL MOSTLY FOR THE GENTILES (NON-JEWS).** But it is important to see how often he speaks of the Sabbath. The Gospels and Acts speak 54 times about the Sabbath. Sabbath is mentioned 17 times in Luke and 9 in Acts. It is mentioned 9 times in Matthew, 10 in Mark, and 9 in John. As a Gentile believer, Luke certainly believed in the seventh-day Sabbath for both Jews and Gentiles. The first coming of Christ made no difference in the keeping of the Sabbath.

“During His ministry [work done for God] on earth, Christ honored the Sabbath. In all His teaching He showed deep respect for the Sabbath that He Himself had given. In Christ’s day, the Sabbath had become so twisted that its keeping showed the selfishness of men rather than the character [thoughts; feelings; acts] of God. Christ corrected the false teaching by the religious leaders who had tried to make Him out to be a false prophet.”<sup>1</sup>—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Prophets [Special Messengers] and Kings*, page 183.

This week’s lesson turns to Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath: how He kept the Sabbath and how He set an example for us to follow. The practice of keeping the first day of the week (Sunday) as Sabbath has no approval from Christ or from the New Testament.

**“AS HIS CUSTOM [HABIT] WAS”  
(Luke 4:16–30; Isaiah 61:1, 2)**

Luke 4:16 is a good Adventist verse. Most of us use it in evangelistic<sup>2</sup> meetings or in Bible studies in order to point out that it was the practice of Jesus to keep the Sabbath.

Synagogues (Jewish houses of worship) played an important part in Jewish religious life. Synagogues became important during the time the Jews were slaves in Babylon and the temple had been destroyed. They were built for worship and for the schooling of young children. A synagogue could be built wherever there were at least ten Jewish families. Growing up in Nazareth, Jesus followed the “custom” of going to the synagogue each Sabbath. And now on His first journey to His hometown, the Sabbath finds Him in the synagogue.

**Read Mark 1:21; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16–30; Luke 6:6–11; Luke 13:10–16; and Luke 14:1–5. What do these verses teach us about Jesus and the Sabbath? As you read them, ask yourself where you can find examples of Jesus either removing our responsibility to keep the Sabbath or pointing to another day to replace it.**

“As His custom was” (Luke 4:16, NKJV). Only Luke uses this wording. In Luke 4:16, Jesus attended the synagogue in Nazareth. And in Luke 22:39, the cross drew near, and Jesus “went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives” (RSV). Both times the “custom” meant worship and prayer.

Why should we make it our custom to go to church on Sabbath, as Jesus went to the synagogue on Sabbath?

First, God is everywhere. He may be worshiped anywhere. But there is something special about getting together in a common place on the day chosen at Creation and commanded in the Ten Commandments, His law.

Second, it gives us a public opportunity to show that God is our Creator and Savior.

Finally, it gives an opportunity for fellowship and sharing one another’s joys and concerns.

**There are those who say we practice legalism.<sup>3</sup> Others believe we are in “slavery” to the law just because we keep the Sabbath. But they have clearly missed out on the great blessing that the Sabbath can bring. In what ways have you experienced just how Sabbath keeping can make us feel free and peaceful?**



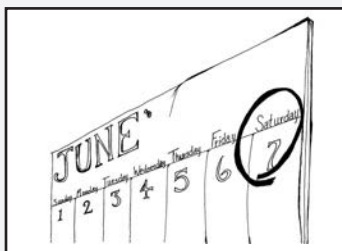
**Going to church on Sabbath gives us a public opportunity to show that God is our Creator and Savior.**

### DEFINITIONS

2. evangelistic—having to do with spreading the gospel by preaching it from place to place.

3. legalism—the belief that obedience to the law will save you.

## SABBATH: ITS MESSAGE AND MEANING (Luke 4:17–19)



The Sabbath is a symbol of the freedom from sin we have in Christ.

The Sabbath was meant to be kept by going to church in order to worship. The Sabbath was also meant for hearing God’s Word (the Bible). A life without His Word is not far from the trap of sin: “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:11, NKJV).

**Read Luke 4:17–19. Today we look back upon what we know about Jesus, about who He was, and what He has done for us. Having said that, how do we understand the meaning of these words in Luke 4:17–19? Have you experienced how real Jesus is as your Savior?**

After reading from Isaiah 61:1, 2, Jesus said, “ ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’ ” (Luke 4:21, NKJV). The word *today* deserves note. The Jews expected the kingdom of God and their Savior to come at some time in the future as a warrior king to throw out an enemy army and to take over the throne of David. But Jesus was saying that the kingdom had already come in His person and that He would break the power of sin, crush the devil, and free the slaves of Satan in His kingdom.

Think, too, about how closely tied the Sabbath is with Jesus’ claims as the Messiah (the Chosen One). The Sabbath is a day of rest, rest in Christ (Hebrews 4:1–4). The Sabbath is a symbol of freedom, the freedom we have in Christ (Romans 6:6, 7). The Sabbath also shows both God’s act of Creation and the promise of re-creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 15:51–53). It is not strange that Jesus chose the Sabbath day to do many of His healings and to free those who had been imprisoned by sickness.

The Sabbath day is carved in something that lasts longer than stone (time!). The Sabbath is meant to remind us weekly of what Jesus has given to us so kindly.

**How has Sabbath keeping better helped you to understand salvation by faith alone? How can it also help us to rest in what Christ has done for us, instead of trying to earn our way to heaven?**

## SABBATH HEALINGS AT CAPERNAUM<sup>4</sup> (Luke 4:31–37)

At Nazareth, people did not accept Jesus. So, Jesus went back to Capernaum. There He had already ministered (done work for God) before (Matthew 4:13). This important city became the “home” for Jesus’ Galilean ministry (work). In this city was a synagogue, possibly built by a Roman officer (Luke 7:5). As it was His custom to do, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day.

On this single Sabbath, Jesus’ ministry covered many activities—teaching, healing, preaching. Nothing is said about what Jesus preached. But the reaction of the people was one of astonishment (surprise): “For His word was with authority” (Luke 4:32, NKJV). Jesus’ teaching was very different from that of the rabbis (religious teachers). Here He was preaching with authority, rooted in the Bible. It was delivered with the power of the Holy Spirit, calling sin by its right name, and encouraging repentance (a return to God).

**Read Luke 4:31–37. What powerful truths are shown in these verses about (1) the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan), (2) the demons, (3) the purpose of the Sabbath, and (4) the power of God over evil?**

In Luke 4:31–41, we have the first of many healings on the Sabbath that Luke records (read Luke 4:38, 39; Luke 6:6–11; Luke 13:10–16; and Luke 14:1–6). In the Nazareth sermon, Jesus announced that it was His mission to bring relief, to heal, and to restore<sup>5</sup> those who are brokenhearted and suffering. Here in Capernaum, on a Sabbath day, when the synagogue was full of worshipers, a demon-possessed man faced Jesus with a confession: “ ‘Let us alone! . . . You, Jesus of Nazareth. . . . I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ ” (Luke 4:34, NKJV). The demon, being one of the fallen angels, was quick to recognize the Savior in human form. In this story, the veil (covering) between the seen and unseen worlds has been pulled aside.

**Think of how openly the great controversy was shown here. Often it is not that clear. But how are you seeing it played out in your own life? What is your only hope of victory in this battle? Read also 1 Corinthians 15:2.**



**It was Jesus’ mission to heal the brokenhearted and the suffering.**

### DEFINITIONS

4. Capernaum—a town northwest of the Lake of Galilee.
5. restore—make new; make whole.

**THE LORD OF THE SABBATH (Luke 6:1–5)**

Luke 6:1–11 gives two stories about Jesus dealing with the Pharisees (Jewish religious leaders) over the Sabbath.

**Read the first story in Luke 6:1–5. The Pharisees blamed Jesus and His disciples for not caring for the Law and the Sabbath. How did Jesus face this?**

While walking through a field, the disciples picked off the heads of grain, rubbed them in their palms, and ate them. But the Pharisees twisted the fact to blame the disciples for breaking the Sabbath commandment. Jesus sets the story straight and points the Pharisees to King David. When David was hungry, he entered the House of God, and he and his men ate the shewbread. Only the priests were allowed (given the right) to eat the shewbread. By reminding them about the story, Jesus was trying to help the Pharisees to understand that they had falsely believed they could be saved by keeping their man-made laws. The Pharisees had heaped rule upon rule. They had turned the Sabbath from being a joy into being a burden.

**Read the second story in Luke 6:6–11. What lessons about the Sabbath are seen here?**

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell this story. But only Luke tells us that the hand that was withered was the man's right hand. Dr. Luke's additional detail helps us to understand how this physical condition must have had a terrible effect on the man's ability to carry on a normal life. The event caused two things to happen: first, the Pharisees waited to charge Jesus with breaking the Sabbath when He chose to heal the man. Second, Jesus read their hearts and showed that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. He is the One who created the Sabbath, and He would not fail in His mission to deliver the broken man from being a slave of the sin-sick world. So, Jesus put Sabbath keeping in the proper light. It is lawful on the Sabbath day to do good and to save life (Luke 6:9–11).

**Think how blinded these leaders were by their own rules that they thought were God's. How can we make sure that we do not fall into the same trap of letting traditions and human teachings blind us to God's deeper truths?**

## THE SABBATH: THE SICK VERSUS THE OX AND THE DONKEY (Luke 13:10–16)

Of the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, only Luke records these two Sabbath healings of Jesus (Luke 13:10–16; Luke 14:1–5). The first caused the ruler of the synagogue to be disgusted with Jesus. The second put the Pharisees to silence. In either case, the enemies of Jesus were using wrong interpretations of the law to blame Jesus for breaking the Sabbath.

**Read Luke 13:10–16 and Luke 14:1–6. What important truths are shown here about how easy it is to twist important Bible truths?**

Think about the crippled woman. In Jesus' time, women were looked down upon by the Pharisees and treated as second-class citizens. This woman was crippled for 18 years. It was long enough to test anyone's patience and to make her think that life was hopeless. And, finally, she totally was unable to free herself.

Jesus comes to her. Jesus sees her, *calls* her to come near Him, *speaks* to her in order that she may be healed, *lays* (puts) His hands on her, and "right away she stood up straight" (Luke 13:13, NIV). Eighteen years of suffering suddenly give way to a moment of great joy, and she "*praised* God" (verse 13). Each verb that Luke used is the Holy Spirit's way of recognizing the worth of the woman. And, really, the worth of every person who is looked down upon, no matter what that person's situation is.

In the second miracle (Luke 14:1–6), Jesus stayed at a Pharisee's home for a meal on the Sabbath. He then heals a man who suffered from dropsy.<sup>6</sup> Jesus knew that the leaders were watching Him closely. So, He raised two questions: first, on the purpose of the law (" 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' " [verse 3]); second, on the worth of a human person (" 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit [hole], will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?' " [verse 5, NKJV]). Jesus' point should have been clear. It seems they understood because according to Luke they had no answer to what He had said. Jesus showed their two-facedness for what it was. It was the worst kind because it came under a veil of pretended holiness over what they thought to be breaking God's holy law.

How careful we need to be.



**In a moment of great joy, the crippled woman stood up straight and praised God for healing her.**

### DEFINITIONS

6. dropsy—swelling of the body.

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “God could not for a moment hold back His hand from blessing us on the Sabbath day, or man would faint and die. And man also has a work to do on this [the Sabbath] day. The needs of life must be taken care of. The sick must be cared for. The wants of the needy must be taken care of too. A person will be held guilty if he or she fails to lessen suffering on the Sabbath. God’s holy rest day was made for man. Acts of mercy are acceptable to God on the Sabbath. God does not want His created beings [persons or animals] to suffer an hour’s pain that may be taken away or removed upon the Sabbath or any other day.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 207.

“The Sabbath was the only teaching that would separate the Jews completely from other nations nearby. God chose Sabbath keeping to make the Jews stand out as His special worshipers. It was to be an example of their separation from idol worship and of their connection with the true God. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith their thoughts, feelings, and acts must be like Christ’s.”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, page 283.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 It is wonderful that the Bible is very clear about Jesus and the Sabbath. But millions of churchgoers around the world still believe that the seventh-day Sabbath is no longer important to keep holy. They also think that keeping it is equal to legalism. What should this tell us about why full obedience to the Word of God is so important? With something as basic as God’s holy law, why are crowds of people so deceived? What important warning does Jesus give us in Mark 13:22?
- 2 Look at how Satan has worked so hard to destroy the Sabbath. He used the leaders in Israel to turn the Sabbath into a heavy burden, greatly removing its true meaning from what it was supposed to mean. And he has used leaders in the church to look down on it as old-fashioned, legalistic, or just a Jewish tradition. What is it about the Sabbath, and what does it involve, that would make it such a target of Satan’s hatred?
- 3 Jesus is the “ ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ ” (Luke 6:5, NKJV). What does this sentence really mean for Christians and their attitude (feeling) toward the Sabbath?