

• *Two Sabbath stories*

• *Religious people get offended by Jesus*

**Eating grain on the Sabbath**

• *The Sabbath law broken – two answers*

• *The bigger requirements of compassion and love*

• *The Son of Man can break the Sabbath because it is His Sabbath!*

• *Jesus never broke the Mosaic law though He certainly broke exaggerations of it*

• *The Mosaic law which pointed to Jesus was about to come to an end*

• *Their love of rules blocked the way to faith*

**Healing on the Sabbath**

• *Looking out for a reason to accuse Jesus*

The stories about some grain being eaten on the Sabbath <sup>□1</sup> and about a man being healed on the Sabbath <sup>□2</sup> have their parallels in Mark's Gospel <sup>□3</sup>.

There is a big difference between religion and faith. Again and again in these gospel stories we discover that 'religious' people get offended with Jesus. Many religious people, even church people, do not have a living fellowship with God.

Take the story in **Luke 6:1-5**. It shows that religious people cannot always tell the difference between big laws and little laws. Jesus and His disciples are walking through the fields on a Saturday, a Sabbath. As they do so, they pluck some grain and start rubbing them in their hands to get to the kernel of the grain <sup>□1</sup>. Immediately the Pharisees accuse Jesus and His disciples of 'harvesting' <sup>□2</sup>; they have in mind the law of Exodus 34:21 which insists that the Sabbath must be kept at harvest-time!

Jesus answers in two ways. First, David in an emergency 'broke the law' about not eating bread inside the sanctuary at Nob. 'Small' laws about ritual and ceremony can be broken when bigger requirements of love and compassion are at stake <sup>□1</sup>.

Second, Jesus is 'the Son of Man'. At this point Jesus does not explain what He means by the phrase '*The Son of Man is...*'. It could be just a Hebrew way of saying 'I am...'. But actually the phrase comes from Daniel 7:13 and soon it will become clear that 'Son of Man' is Jesus' way of talking about His being the Son of God, the Messiah, the fulfilment of Daniel 7:13. He can break the Sabbath because it is His Sabbath! He reserves the right to change the Mosaic law if He wants to! And He – as the 'Son of Man' – had plans to abolish the Sabbath altogether! He certainly was not planning to be cramped and restricted in life by the legalism and exaggerations of the law that the Pharisees loved so much. Legalistic people generally have a preoccupation about some quite small things. At the time of Jesus the 'Sabbath' was to be kept. One can understand this. The Sabbath was an important part of the Mosaic law. Jesus never broke the Mosaic law, although He certainly broke exaggerations and perversions of the Mosaic law.

But the Mosaic law was about to come to an end. There was something far more important than the Sabbath, and that was Jesus Himself. They are preoccupied about the Mosaic system, but the Mosaic law pointed to Jesus and Jesus is ministering among them. They love the law but they do not love the One that the law points to, Jesus. They want to discuss law; Jesus wants to talk about Himself. The law is not the answer to their need of salvation; Jesus is the answer Himself. His miracles draw attention to the greatness of His person. He is the Son of God. Can they not see it? No, their love of religious law blocks the way to faith in Jesus.

Consider the story in **Luke 6:6-11**. It is another Sabbath day. Jesus is known to heal people. He goes into a synagogue where there is a man with a withered hand <sup>□1</sup>. The scribes and Pharisees are actually looking out for a reason to accuse Jesus <sup>□2</sup>. What sort of religion is this? What is it that fills a person's heart with an eagerness to find fault and cause trouble? Religious people can be utterly blind! How can God be leading them by the Spirit into an accusing spirit?

□1 6:1-5  
□2 6:6-11  
□3 see Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-6

□1 6:1  
□2 6:2

□1 6:3-4

□1 6:6  
□2 6:7

• *Enemies do not discourage Jesus*

• *Their religion is just a blind tradition*

• *What religion and legalism can never do, one word of Jesus is able to perform*

## Conclusions

• *Five differences between legalistic religious people and God's people*

Jesus knows all about them <sup>¶1</sup> and He is not bothered! He plans to heal the man anyway. Enemies do not discourage Jesus <sup>¶2</sup>! As He heals the man He puts a question to them: why are they more eager to keep a holy day than to see a man restored to life and health? Their legalistic ways are destructive. Their religion kills <sup>¶3</sup>. He looks around at them all, taking His time and appealing to them. He is not afraid of them. He wants them to consider His words. Their religion is just a blind tradition <sup>¶4</sup>. Then He proceeds with the healing <sup>¶5</sup>. It leads to their being filled with fury and rage. These men with their religion are now plotting to see how they can get rid of this Jesus who upturns their religion and lives for the praise of the glory of God's grace.

Jesus invites the man to faith. 'Stretch out your hand,' says Jesus. I can imagine the man saying, 'But sir that is the one thing I cannot do. I have been trying to stretch out my hand for years. How can you ask me to do such a thing?' But when Jesus gives a command, His power comes with the command! Whatever He commands can be done. Because Jesus has told him to stretch out his hand, he does it, and he finds he can do it! What has been impossible all these years he has done. He has stretched out his hand! What religion and legalism can never do, one word of Jesus is able to perform.

Let us come to some conclusions.

- (i) Religious people are bothered about laws; God's people live to the praise of the glory of God's grace.
- (ii) Religious people are bothered about small things; God's people are concerned about 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' <sup>¶1</sup>.
- (iii) Religious people are very concerned about Sabbaths and 'holy days'; God's people love the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Himself.
- (iv) Religious people put laws above people; God's people learn to be compassionate and merciful.
- (v) Religious people get angry when their religion is contradicted; God's people carry on regardless – as Jesus did.

¶1 6:8a  
¶2 6:8b

¶3 6:9  
¶4 6:10a  
¶5 6:10b

¶1 Rom 14:17

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**Dr Michael Eaton** is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His expository commentaries are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.

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