

# **The Book of Luke**

## **Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath**

Lesson #5 for May 2, 2015

Scriptures: Mark 1:21; 6:22; Luke 4:17-19,31-37; 6:1-11; 13:10-16; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

1. Luke, the one Gospel writer who was not a Jew, spoke more frequently about the Sabbath in his two-part history of the early church (Luke and Acts) than did any of the other Gospel writers. Although he was Greek, he clearly believed in the seventh-day Sabbath for Jews and Christians.

Christ, during His earthly ministry, emphasized the binding claims of the Sabbath; in all His teaching He showed reverence for the institution He Himself had given. In His day, the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of God. Christ set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 183.1.

2. So, why do so many people who call themselves Christians observe the first day of the week instead of the seventh-day as Sabbath? Have they been deceived?
3. Read Luke 4:16-30. Clearly, Jesus made a regular habit of going to the synagogue on Sabbath. We should do the same.
4. The synagogue was very important in the life of the Jews. There was only one temple, and that was at Jerusalem. But, in any community where there were at least ten Jewish families, they were expected to establish a synagogue. That would be not only a place to go on Sabbath to worship, but also a place where the young Jewish males would go for schooling. Jesus regularly attended the synagogue in Nazareth. (See Luke 4:16.)
5. Read Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16-30; 6:6-11; 13:10-16; 14:1-5. If you were to take time to read all the other verses in the New Testament referring to the Sabbath, you would find that in addition to Jesus, all the disciples and the apostles clearly made a regular practice of observing the Sabbath.
6. In fact, the first unambiguous use of the term *Lord's day* for the first day of the week—in this instance, the resurrection Sunday—appears in the little apocryphal book called *The Gospel According to Peter* which was composed around A.D. 175.

<sup>9</sup> and in the night in which the Lord's day was drawing on, as the soldiers kept guard two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in the heaven; and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with great light and approached the tomb. And that stone which was put at the door rolled of itself and made way in a part; and the tomb was opened, and both the young men entered in.... <sup>12</sup> and at dawn upon the Lord's day Mary Magdalene, a disciple of the Lord, fearing because of the Jews, since they were burning with wrath, had not done at the Lord's sepulcher that things which women are wont to do for those that die and for those that are beloved by them—she took her friends with her and came to the sepulcher where he was laid. (*The Gospel According to Peter* 9,12 (175 A.D.); *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9)

7. Why should Christians attend church regularly on the Sabbath in the same manner as Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath? Isn't God everywhere? We worship Him or pray to Him or think about Him wherever we are? So, what is special about being in church

on Sabbath? 1) It is a place for corporate worship, fellowship, and an acknowledgment to those watching us that we honor God's commandments. 2) By worshiping on the Sabbath day, we affirm our belief that God is our Creator, our Redeemer, and Friend. 3) The Sabbath is intended to be a day of glorious celebration, fellowship, and sharing with friends and with God.

8. In light of these facts, those who accuse Sabbathkeepers of legalism, being in bondage, or of not even being truly Christian clearly have not understood what the Sabbath is all about.
9. Read Luke 4:15-30. What was happening on that Sabbath in Nazareth? Surely, the people of Nazareth had already recognized that Jesus was not an average young person. Had any of them suspected He might be something special? Even the Messiah? What did they think of Him as a child and young person? Have you heard of Jesus being a mechanic?

Jesus . . . went to Nazareth, where he was known as an unpretending mechanic, and entered a synagogue upon the Sabbath. As was customary, the elder read from the prophets, and exhorted the people to continue to hope for the Coming One, who would bring in a glorious reign, and subdue all oppression. He sought to animate the faith and courage of the Jews, by rehearsing the evidences of Messiah's soon coming, dwelling especially upon the kingly power and glorious majesty that would attend his advent. He kept before his hearers the idea that the reign of Christ would be upon an earthly throne in Jerusalem, and his kingdom would be a temporal one. He taught them that Messiah would appear at the head of armies, to conquer the heathen and deliver Israel from the oppression of their enemies.

At the close of the service, Jesus rose with calm dignity, and requested them to bring him the book of the prophet Esaias. "And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and [BEGIN P.111] sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." [Luke 4:17-22]

The scripture which Jesus read was understood by all to refer to the coming Messiah and his work. And when the Saviour explained the words he had read, and pointed out the sacred office of the Messiah,—a reliever of the oppressed, a liberator of the captives, a healer of the afflicted, restoring sight to the blind, and revealing to the world the light of truth,—the people were thrilled with the wisdom and power of his words and responded to them with fervent amens and praises to the Lord. Jesus had not been educated in the school of the prophets, yet the most learned Rabbis could not speak with more confidence and authority than did this young Galilean.—Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, Vol. 2, pp. 110.2–111.0 (1870), Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association; *Redemption*, Book 4, pp. 3.1-4.1. [Content in brackets is added.]

10. It should be noted that Jesus's mother tongue was Aramaic, but He was able to read the Hebrew Bible in Hebrew; and He, no doubt, spoke Greek and probably Latin as well.

11. When Jesus read the passage from Isaiah 61:1-2 and then told them that the passage was being fulfilled that day before their very eyes, they suddenly realized that He was claiming to be the Messiah. But, He was not the Messiah for whom they were looking. Since they were very sure that the Messiah was coming to deliver them in a dramatic, militaristic way by getting rid of the Romans and reestablishing the throne of David, the idea that Jesus could be the coming Messiah was utter heresy, even blasphemy. **They wanted to be free from the Roman yoke not from their bondage to sin!**
12. There are many passages in Scripture suggesting that Sabbath is a day of rest which is tied to freedom, liberation, even re-creation. (See Hebrews 4:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.)
13. Why did Jesus choose to do so many of His healings on the Sabbath? Or, did He? Or, was it that healings on the Sabbath were more likely to be recorded for us? Or, was it just that the Sabbath healings caused such a stir and thus led to major incidents with the Pharisees while healings on other days did not? Was that civil disobedience?
14. A careful look at Scripture and the later history of God's people down through the millennia makes it clear that the Sabbath is not just a day of rest. It is a day to worship God, to gather together, to share, to witness, to do good, and to spend time with family and friends. It has always been a mark of God's true people.
15. Read Luke 4:31-37. What should these verses teach us about the great controversy? The reality of demons? The purpose of the Sabbath? And even the power of God over evil? That day, Jesus had taught with great authority. He spoke in parables that they all could understand. He demonstrated His power over the Devil. When Jesus commanded, the Devil had to obey. However, the demons knew exactly who Jesus was and why He had come to this earth. (Luke 4:34,41) So, why did Jesus tell the demons not to tell what they knew? If Jesus accepted their statement that He was the Messiah, the people would want to know when He was going to lead them against the Romans! This passage is a proof to us that truth will triumph over evil. While the people were rejoicing, the Pharisees were plotting to kill Him.
16. What was Satan's purpose in identifying Jesus as the Son of God and even the Messiah through these demon-possessed souls? In the stories about demon-possessed people, do we see an open manifestation of the great controversy?
17. Read Luke 6:1-11. There are many accounts in the Gospels of Jesus being in conflict with the Pharisees over how to observe the Sabbath. In this passage, we have two of them. Jesus was making every possible effort to distinguish between true observance of the Sabbath and the pile of human traditions that they held so dearly. Jesus healed a man with a withered right hand. In doing so, Jesus again made it clear that the Sabbath is for doing good, for healing the sick, etc. Surely, the common people must have rejoiced to see their neighbor and friend healed of his malady. Meanwhile, the Pharisees were plotting how they could kill Jesus!
18. How blinded were those leaders by their own rules and regulations which they thought were God's? How can we make sure that we do not fall into the same trap of allowing human traditions or human teachings to blind us to deeper divine truths?
19. Read Luke 9:51. For approximately the last six months of His ministry, Jesus spent most of His time outside of the Jewish territories of Judea and Galilee. Much of that time was spent on the eastern side of the Jordan in the territory known as Perea. Whenever He went back to Judea or Galilee, the Pharisees sought opportunities to arrest Him and kill Him.

Then Jesus left that place, went to the province of Judea, and crossed the

River Jordan. Crowds came flocking to him again, and he taught them, as he always did.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., Mark 10:1). New York: American Bible Society.

A considerable part of the closing months of Christ's ministry was spent in Perea, the province on "the farther side of Jordan" from Judea. Here the multitude thronged His steps, as in His early ministry in Galilee, and much of His former teaching was repeated.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 488.3.

20. Why do you think Luke was the only Gospel writer who reported on this part of Christ's life? Was it because during this time Jesus spent most of His time in Perea which was Gentile territory instead of being in Jewish territory? Is that why the miracles recorded in Luke 13:10-17 and 14:1-6 are reported only by Luke?

Luke 13:15-17: <sup>15</sup> The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Any one of you would untie your ox or your donkey from the stall and take it out to give it water on the Sabbath. <sup>16</sup> Now here is this descendant of Abraham whom Satan has kept bound up for eighteen years; should she not be released on the Sabbath?" <sup>17</sup> **His answer made his enemies ashamed of themselves, while the people rejoiced over all the wonderful things that he did.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., Luke 13:15-17). New York: American Bible Society.

21. It is interesting to note that the Jews living in this Gentile territory rejoiced over the wonderful things that Jesus did, and His enemies were ashamed of themselves. No such reports were made regarding any of the miracles Jesus did on the Sabbath in Jewish territory. Those Jewish authorities had come to believe that their rules were more important than the health of the victims of sin.
22. Think of the story of this crippled woman. Bent over for 18 years, suddenly she was able to stand up straight and walk like an ordinary human being. Can you imagine her feelings? No wonder she glorified God!
23. Read Luke 14:1-6. In healing this man with swollen hands and feet, Jesus once again challenged the Pharisees on the subject of Sabbathkeeping. He not only questioned them about the whole purpose of the law but also the relative value of human life! They got the point because they remained silent! There was no answer! What kind of people are so bound up by their mistaken beliefs that they cannot even rejoice to see someone healed?
24. Frequently, Jesus mentioned the fact that He was working on the Sabbath just as His Father always works on the Sabbath.

No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshipers. **It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.3.  
[Bold type is added.]

25. In light of all this evidence, how can so many people today be mistaken about the observance of the Sabbath? What is different about the way Sundaykeepers observe their Sunday versus the way Sabbathkeepers observe their Sabbath? To many Sundaykeepers,

the fact that they attend services for one or two hours fulfills their responsibility. They can go home and watch the football game, go to a movie, work in the garden, or whatever else they choose to do. Sabbathkeepers recognize that God invites them to share a full 24 hours of special time with Him. It has been suggested that if you can convince someone that s/he needs to set aside a full 24 hours to worship God each week, it will be very easy to convince him/her to worship on Saturday instead of Sunday. Do you believe that is true?

26. Read Mark 13:22. Is it not true that false christs and false prophets will come and almost deceive the very elect? How would you compare these teachings of the Pharisees regarding the Sabbath in the days of Jesus with modern Christian church leaders who say the Sabbath is merely an antiquated, legalistic Jewish tradition? Why is Satan so opposed to the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath? Why does Jesus want us to recognize Him as the Lord of the Sabbath? (Luke 6:5) A correct observance of the Sabbath means that we recognize the Creator as Lord of the Sabbath. And Satan has never been a creator.
27. If Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, what would it be like to spend a full day with Him in Person? Do we act on our Sabbath days as if the Lord of the universe is with us and is in charge of our day?
28. Try to imagine what it would have been like to observe the earthly family of Jesus in the town of Nazareth for a complete Sabbath from Friday sundown to Sabbath sundown. What do you think we would learn if we could do that?
29. Why did Jesus claim that He is the Lord of the Sabbath? Didn't He create it? (Genesis 2:2) Didn't He command us to remember it and to keep it as a sign between us and Himself? (Exodus 20:8-11; Ezekiel 20:12,20)
30. Read Luke 6:1-5. It is interesting to observe that Jesus compared Himself with David. What the Jewish leaders did not recognize was that they had in their presence the Messiah who had been anointed at His baptism, but He had not yet been crowned. In the story that Jesus referred to, David had also been anointed but had not yet been accepted as king. They were each awaiting their kingship.
31. Can we be sure that the Sabbath really falls on Saturday? Read Luke 23:54-56 and Luke 24:1 in several different versions including one of the more modern versions. There are no verses in the New Testament which describe either Jesus or any of His disciples or the apostles worshiping on any day other than the seventh-day Sabbath.
32. Jesus performed amazing miracles on the Sabbath. We do not have that ability. But, what can we do which would demonstrate our correct understanding of how to keep Sabbath? We can relieve pain. We can meet people's needs. We can share the gospel. However, the Sabbath is not for doing our own business. (Isaiah 58:13-14)
33. Is it important to distinguish between the Sabbath as a doctrine and the Sabbath as an experience? We need to understand clearly why we observe the Sabbath and why it is important. We also need to enter the experience of the Sabbath and learn to celebrate and rejoice with our heavenly Father.
34. Is observing the Sabbath just a way of separating ourselves from the majority of Christians? What are the implications of observing the Sabbath? Is it more than just a religious routine? What is implied when we truly worship God on the Sabbath? Aren't we recognizing Him as our Creator, our Redeemer, our Example, and our Friend? Why has the Sabbath been singled out in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen White as the great final test of allegiance to God at the end of this world history?

The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth

especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. . . . The keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.2; *LDE* 225.2; *Mar* 162.5; 215.4; *4SP* 422.2; *RH*, April 27, 1911 par. 17.

35. When the faithful at the end of this world's history observe the Sabbath even when it is forbidden by law to do so, they are saying: 1) That they belong to God; 2) That they recognize Him as their Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer; and 3) That obedience to Him is more important than obedience to any earthly human dictate, even more so than life itself.
36. Abraham Heschel called the Sabbath a "cathedral in time." What did he mean by saying that? Isn't the Sabbath a place and time for us to celebrate with our heavenly Father, the holy angels, and our fellow Christians? Surely, we recognize that Jesus did not come to this earth to do away with the Sabbath.
37. Paul also kept the Sabbath very faithfully. See Acts 13:14,42,44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4.
38. Read Isaiah 58:13-14. Down through biblical times and through subsequent generations, why has the Sabbath often been turned into a burden? What can we do to counteract that awful trend? Observing the Sabbath is one way of recognizing that God has made us and sustains us every day. He does not stop that work on the Sabbath.

God could not for a moment stay His hand, or man would faint and die. And man also has a work to perform on this [the Sabbath] day. The necessities of life must be attended to, the sick must be cared for, and the wants of the needy must be supplied. He will not be held guiltless who neglects to relieve suffering on the Sabbath. God's holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent. God does not desire His creatures to suffer an hour's pain that may be relieved upon the Sabbath or any other day.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 207.1. [Content in brackets is added.]

39. How do you expect to celebrate the Sabbath in heaven? And on the new earth? Are we ready to begin that practice now?

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Last Modified: April 4, 2015

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