

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 63

July 17, 2020

Welcome to another session for the Mind of Christ. I am in section 50. I've been following the plan from A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels. We're on section 50 and we're taking things chronologically here. Our plan in the Mind of Christ is to look at everything Jesus did and everything Jesus said and to try our best to understand **how He thinks so that we can have the mind of Christ and that we can apply that thinking to our own lives** ... as it comes day by day it will just be a part of our way of thinking.

So, it's important to take it slow. This is an in depth study of the Bible. This is not something that you normally get on most studies that you access. This is meant to be deep; we're looking very closely at the text. This will probably be a little bit shorter than most of our sections because we've dealt with some of the principles in it previously, so I'm not going to over and repeat those again. But I want to start by reading the texts. There are 3 different ones, and once we've read all three we'll dive into them.

Matthew 12:1-8

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.² But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “**Look** (behold), Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.”³ But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,⁴ how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?⁵ Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?⁶ But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.⁷ But if you had known what this means, ‘**I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,**’ you would not have condemned the innocent.⁸ **For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**”

Mark 2:23-28

And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to **make their way along** while picking the heads of grain.²⁴ The Pharisees were saying to Him, “**Look** (behold), why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”²⁵ And He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry;²⁶ how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?”²⁷ Jesus said to them, “**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**²⁸ **So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**”

Luke 6:1-5.

Now it happened that He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain.² But some of the Pharisees said, “Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”³ And Jesus answering them said, “Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him,⁴ how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?”⁵ And He was saying to them, “**The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**”

I'll remind us that we're still talking about the Sabbath day and the conflict that Jesus had with some of the Teachers of the Law, over what you can do and what you can't do on the Sabbath.

The occasion is the Sabbath Day, obviously and Jesus' disciples are going through the grain fields. The Grainfields are, more than likely fields of wheat, and they were hungry so they plucked some of the heads of grain and they rubbed their hands together and got the husk, the chaff off of the grain and they ate some of the kernels of grain having this little snack.

In **Mark 2:23** it says the disciples were making their way along, they were on a road, they were making progress; they were on a journey and just continuing on. The actions observed by the Pharisees were: they were walking, they were picking the grain, they were rubbing it together and they were eating. Those are the four things they were actually doing as they walked along either through, beside, or near the grainfields.

The question is ‘why are the disciples doing this?’ It doesn’t say that they were trespassing by the way, or that they were stealing, they were just accused of ‘breaking the Sabbath’. So, why were they doing this? Why are the disciples doing what is ‘unlawful’ to do on the Sabbath?

The word “lawful” is (*εξεστίν*) means to be able to do something, to allow, to let, what one has permission to do, so why were they doing what was not permitted or not allowed? “not” (*οὐκ*) permitted (*οὐκ εξεστίν*)

Mark has the Pharisees saying, “See here, or look” literally, means to “behold”. The word expresses excitement. When the Pharisees **saw** what they were doing, they used the word “behold” meaning they were somewhat excited, they were surprised. It’s kind of like when you’re riding along and your turn a corner and you see, maybe, a beautiful sunset sky or you say, “**look**” with amazement. In this case, it was like when you see something kind of morally startling; when you observe someone doing something they **shouldn’t** be doing and the shock of seeing someone doing this immoral thing causes an exclamation, like “Look!” It’s almost like ‘can you believe what they’re doing?’

So what causes us to “look”, to “behold” or to “become startled”? What catches our attention these days? Did the scene prompt this in the Pharisees ... had their moral sensitivity conditioned by years of teaching and reinforced by observations of how others have handled things led them to be nervously surprised when they saw the disciples eating a handful of wheat? What caused them to be somewhat startled by this? It must have been something that was fairly unusual for them to see. But it raises a point ... just this word startled. What startles us today? Do we see things today and our sensitivities are aroused or are we like ‘wow, I can’t believe that’? Or, are we not startled by **anything** anymore? I wonder.

This one-word ‘nugget’ in the text is significant and surely we do not want to lose our ability to say “Look!” What arouses it? When it is aroused, does it come from a **judgmental** spirit or for a **true concern for the person involved**? So, we could be aroused when we just see somebody doing something wrong and be “self-righteous”, like “I can’t believe what they’re doing”, or could we be alarmed because we see a danger in what people are doing?

This word is found in other contexts as well. In **John 1:36** John the Baptist says, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” That would be something to be startled over. But let’s get back to the ‘Sabbath Day’ thing.

Did the law of ‘gleaning’ make the fact that they were in someone else’s field eating someone else’s grain really a non-issue? In other words, the Jews had a custom of leaving grain in the field. It may have already been harvested and maybe there were just some stalks of wheat that remained, and they were just gleaning in the fields and therefore the Pharisees didn’t bring up the issue about them not being allowed to **eat** the grain, it was just an issue of Sabbath. So the practice would be defensible if it were not for the Sabbath Day.

I recall when God gave the manna before the law He required that they gathered double on Friday so that they would not have to work on the Sabbath Day. In fact, He didn’t send any manna on the Sabbath Day. You can see this in **Exodus 16:5**. They were not even allowed to go out of their houses or their tents. The bucket of manna was kept, also, in the Ark of the Covenant as a reminder of God’s provision for them. **Leviticus 23:3** says that they were not to do any work on the Sabbath, they were to completely rest. In **Leviticus 24:5-9** talks about the bread in the Tabernacle set before the Lord on the Sabbath and eaten **only** by the priests. In **Numbers 15:32- 36** is the case of a man gathering wood on the Sabbath and Moses had to make a decision about what was to happen to him. He concluded he had violated the Sabbath Day and the man was taken out and stoned. Surely these Pharisees felt that Moses would support their approach with Jesus and the disciples. Maybe they had that text already in their mind to pull out on Jesus.

When we look at this scene and try to be fair about how the Pharisees had arrived at their position, especially when Jesus will use an Old Testament story of David to justify His actions, this is going to be difficult to understand. Admittedly, this is one of the most difficult passages for me in the Bible of trying to understand the thinking of Jesus. Jesus will base His response and use the Old Testament story on two connected principles. The first is, “The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”, and the second is “the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath.”

So if we want to know the principles that are in Jesus’ mind, I’m not talking about the stories He’s going to tell, but it rests on these two principles. The principles of the Sabbath are “The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”, and secondly “the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath.”

The second one is easier for me to apply than the first one. Moses was **bound** to the Law and had **no** authority to change it ... merely to **obey** it. That’s all he was required to do. However, Jesus came to **fulfill** the **Law** and was Himself the new standard! He could do what Moses could not do and He did that so the Pharisees would recognize Him as the Son of Man, as deity.

The first principle, if held by Moses and validated by David, makes it difficult to know how one could be stoned and another allowed to go free. So, if “the Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”, the how could you allow David to go free and how could you allow the man in Numbers 15 to be stoned? It seems to be two different standards because both were going things that were kind of necessary for their well-being on the Sabbath Day.

The idea of truth that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath is one of Jesus' hardest teachings for me. When I think I understand it, I see a Divine application like the Numbers 15 story of stoning a man who gathered wood on the Sabbath, and then I'm just not so sure if I really have understood what this passage means or what this statement means, and I am going to be honest with you... it is very, very difficult; this thinking of Jesus on this subject and how to apply that. So let's simplify this thing by saying, this: 'government regulations are made for man; not man for government regulations.' Let's see if we can apply it that way.

Government regulations are supposed to "serve us". They're supposed to be something good for us, to benefit us, to make life easier or fairer or cause us to be more protected. What happens when these Government regulations become burdensome and actually cause us to be enslaved to a rule that prevents us from being productive, protected or benefitted in some way? What happens when these rules begin to work against us? They were enacted for our good, but then they become burdensome in a way that makes it difficult for us to live our lives? I don't mean Government regulations that are merely inconvenient or demand something of us but one that actually cancels out the good that it was intended to do.

Jesus addressed this in **Matthew 23:13**. He says, "The goal is to enter the Kingdom but the Scribes and Pharisees prevent people from entering the Kingdom of God." So in **Matthew 23:4** Jesus says, "They place heavy loads on men's shoulders and will not help them carry them." How do these figure into the Sabbath teaching?

The way the Sabbath teachings are written seems to allow little wiggle room for what can be done on that particular day. So this gets to be very difficult for us to understand. Another factor is that Jesus is under the Law while He's here on earth, and He is subject to that Law just as He was under Roman law and He had to pay taxes. So, even though He is Lord of the Sabbath, isn't He, as a man, subject to that Laws of Moses? Isn't it a major offense to lead others into sin? So why would Jesus do anything, (and I don't think He would), but He should not do anything to lead people to sin. So just by claiming that the Sabbath Laws didn't apply to Him just seems difficult here because they may not apply to Him but they apply to those He is leading, and He might be encouraging them to do something that He Himself could actually do.

I understand that a day off each week was beneficial to man, but the command of 'no work' is hard to define. Does this mean no 'occupational' work or 'contractual' work, or 'commercial' or 'commerce' work? This may be, but this is not the kind of story Jesus uses. He uses a story about David doing what was unlawful to do and not being condemned. That was the story that Jesus used.

Or is Jesus simply focusing in this on the hypocrisy of the Scribes and the Pharisees. They created, in a sense, the 'government regulations' but they leave loopholes for themselves so that they are exempt from these 'government regulations'. They make laws for everybody else but they exempt themselves from those laws. Sound familiar? We won't go into the politics of our day but that sounds a little familiar. The example of Jesus healing a person on the Sabbath was condemned but their pulling an ox out of a ditch on the Sabbath was okay. It was even 'compassionate' in their case. But Jesus pointed out their inconsistency.

Jesus is often focused on the hypocrisy of the people who are questioning what He's doing. In the current story of David eating the showbread in the house of God which was not lawful for Him to eat ... this is the phrase which is disturbing. What was Jesus saying? Was it okay for David to break this command and to involve others, his men, and the priests who were killed for helping David? Was it okay for David to do it, or was it okay for the Pharisees and Scribes to give David a pass, but not His disciples? Besides, David ate the bread of the presence and His disciples merely shucked a few heads of grain. You would think that David would be under greater condemnation than the disciples, because he ate the literal showbread in the temple and they merely ate some grain in the field. So, was Jesus merely pointing out the inconsistency of the Pharisees by saying it was okay what David did but it wasn't okay for what the disciples did?

In **1 Samuel 21:1-6** the story says that the priest, Abathar, had no ordinary bread to give them but he did offer up the bread that had already been removed from the table. It was hot, freshly cooked bread that was replacing the old bread that was taken away. Was the old bread unlawful for David to eat, or was he just simply saying it would not have been lawful for him to eat the *fresh* bread that would have been put on the table? **Leviticus 24** says that the bread set before the Lord on Saturday or the Sabbath was to be eaten by the priests **only** in a holy place ... but what about the leftovers? This is what David took.

When Jesus said it was unlawful, is he saying "according to them" and even though they said it was unlawful for David they had found a way to excuse his actions? Were they doing the same with the disciples? They say it was unlawful to pluck, shuck and eat grain on the Sabbath but it is not. Is the key ... that they excused David because he was hungry; and yet they would not excuse the disciples because they were hungry?

They had a double standard. They applied the 'government regulations' discriminately to fit their notions and their circumstances. Their consciences were shaped by this duplicit thinking and they had been shaped that way for so long that they could not see the point that Jesus was making.

Now Jesus offers another illustration from the Law although it is not evident where this illustration is found because we don't have an exact reference for it. But He talks about the priests breaking the Law of the Sabbath and are still innocent. So what is Jesus referencing here? Matthew is the only one to mention this. One person says the priests were commonly by law, required to work on the Sabbath. **Leviticus 12:3** they were to circumcise on the eighth day so that could have been a Sabbath Day. In **Numbers 28:9** they made sacrifices on the day of the Sabbath.

So here, and by using this illusion Jesus is saying the Sabbath work restrictions are not all inclusive, but refer only to certain prescribed work, for instance commercial work or 'pay' work. It would be 'resting' from our occupation but like Christian ministers who work on the "Sabbath" so the Jewish priests also worked on the Sabbath Day.

In my research I just found in this Bible called "The Skeptics and Annotated Bible" on line, it's a very interesting work, it notes that there are no Old Testament references to this. It reminds me of Jack Lewis' statement of those who read difficult passages and seek

harmonious explanations, and those who look for contradictions. It often boils down to those who love God and His Word, and those who simply do not. In other words, you can pretty much find what you're looking for if you don't want to see it.

Jesus offered three principles on the matter of "The Sabbath".

The first principle is '*something greater than the temple is here*' in **Matthew 12:6**.

Second, He refers to **Hosea 6:6** saying, "Go learn what this means, *I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice.*"

Thirdly, Jesus says, "*I am the Lord of the Sabbath*". The corollary to that is that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (and this is found in Mark and Luke).

The walk away message is found in these three principles. The occasion is merely an occasion to learn these three lessons. The **Hosea 6:6** we've already dealt with that about learning what this means – the "hesed" discussion that we had a few weeks ago. And then the question of Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath, we have also previously dealt with that principal as well. The first principal, though, raised by Matthew is new. This idea of someone greater than the temple is here. That's a kind of new principle, so let's dive into that for a few minutes.

2 Chronicles 6:18 and also in **Isaiah 66:1-2** are both applicable to what Jesus is saying on this occasion. God cannot be contained in a man-made temple. He is big and he's great and He cannot be 'put into' a man-made temple.

Solomon acknowledged this in **2 Chronicles** when he said, "But will God indeed dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built." Ask John in **John 1:14** when he said, "The Word became flesh and dwelt for a while among us." Isaiah tells us, "Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? ²For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."

God is looking for a place to dwell and a place to rest ... a place to dwell and a place to rest. What is the Sabbath Day for; it's a day of rest. God is looking for a place to dwell and a place to rest. The connection between **Matthew 12:5** and **12:6** is the word temple. The work the priests did relative to the temple preserved their innocence. Their work was allowed on the Sabbath Day because it was 'temple' work or 'sacred', or 'set apart' work or 'holy' work. Since Jesus is greater than the temple, was His priests' or His disciples' work allowed because it was holy and sacred work? They were employed by the Temple **Himself**, and whatever they were doing that day in the grain fields, or wherever they were going, they were employed by the Temple. They were doing God's work and needed the energy to do it, so they were curbing their hunger by having a snack. Just as the Scribes and Pharisees would not condemn a priest on the Sabbath for carrying out their religious duties, so now the disciples were not to be condemned for carrying out their religious duties.

Jesus is pushing them back to a recognition of who He is. These disciples or apostles (they haven't been named yet in the chronology, but they will be) are in God's plan are more important or sanctioned than even the priests of the Old Testament. This would be hard for the Pharisees to accept that ... probably impossible for them to accept it. The temple and the Jewish priesthood has been almost revered by them; especially the High Priests. He was the closest thing to a legitimate head of state that they had. But now Jesus is saying that *He trumps the Jewish system*, and the priesthood of the disciples, and eventually of all believers, were greater than all the Jews had known. You see that Jesus is ushering in a new idea about the new system that is being put into place where all believers are priests, and *they are all on sacred duty all the time!*

Notice in **Matthew 12:6** Jesus says something *greater* is here ... literally, 'a greater thing'. He did not simply say **someone**. This is why I believe He is saying a new *system* is arriving. The new has come and the old is passing away. The old is based on *sacrifice* and the new is based on *hesed, mercy, and loyalty*. Jesus is stretching their wine skins, and they are breaking. This is near impossible for them to grasp. It's the same for us! *Are we too dense to see how Jesus' system of the priesthood of believers on His mission as they pass through the grainfields is more sacred than the Jewish priestly system? **

This is a great insight. If we can understand it, and if this is really the key, then this is a great insight into the mind of Christ.

The idea of condemning the innocent is a serious matter. We seem more likely not wanting to let the guilty off. It seems from the study of the life of Christ, we are more in danger of condemning, sometimes, the innocent than we are in letting the guilty go free. I know that neither is acceptable but to condemn someone who is innocent is what *Satan* does! He is the great accuser of the brothers; and essentially that's what these Pharisees were doing on that day. They were accusing innocent people of something. In one sense, no one is "innocent" except babies and those who are mentally incompetent.

Romans 3:23 says that *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* but the actions of people *can be* innocent. The word here means "guiltless" or "blameless", one who is not held guilty of certain actions which might otherwise seem guilt-worthy. Remember – **all judgment is with Jesus**. At least this passage shows that religious people who know 'much' about the Bible can be wrong in their understanding and can end up on the wrong side of a judgment.

This should be humbling and give us cause for caution. If I am right on this passage, then what the Pharisees failed to see was:

1. The difference between the occupational work, and the non-occupational work or the sacred work that was being done.
2. The parallel of the Old priesthood add the new priesthood of believers. At least, if they had acknowledged Jesus as Lord; that would have settled the matter even if they didn't understand His thinking on these other things.

Jesus was able, with a few words, to cut directly to the real issue. He was sharp. He was precise. He demonstrated in His ministry what **Hebrews 4:12** says, that **His words were sharper than any double-edged sword dividing the thoughts and intents of the heart just as a surgeon might separate the joint from the marrow.**" He was a skilled surgeon. May I learn to be so skilled... even one tenths as skilled in discernment and interpretation as Jesus was in His life.

I know that when I study the Scripture and I get into it, and there are still things in Scripture that are difficult for me to understand; but as I go into the Scripture more and more, these truths begin to be more clear.

And I would just encourage you to consider what I have said today, and see if it fits the occasion and fits the teaching and finds the harmony in what Jesus is saying; and if it does, then it is a great insight into the mind of Christ.

Again, I just thank you for joining us on this occasion. I would hope that if you have questions or comments or things that you would like to leave, I should have invited you to do that in the beginning. But if you want to leave that or contact me separately, obviously you can always go to our website at <https://www.centralsarasota.org/> and you can find all of our links to all of the teachings that we have. There's also a way there for you to send an E-mail or contact us about anything that we can do to help you.

I appreciate your listening and hopefully we'll see you back here again next week. God bless.