

7. Jesus Came to Bring New Life

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the lack of spiritual understanding by the scribes and Pharisees. We saw that they lacked spiritual understanding because they lacked spiritual life. The same thing is true today. If a person does not have spiritual life, that person will not have spiritual understanding. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus came to give new life and not to patch up the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees.

The scribes and the Pharisees spent their time teaching the traditions of their fathers, instead of teaching the people how to understand and apply the Word of God to their daily lives. Mark 7:6-8 says, “He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” In the previous verses, the Pharisees had just asked Jesus a question about fasting. We saw in the last topic that they had a wrong purpose for fasting.

That is why Jesus went on to give two illustrations. Mark 2:21-22 says, “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.” First, we see that Jesus used an illustration of fixing a hole in an old piece of clothing. In the New Testament times, a new piece of clothing would shrink when it was washed because all material in that day would shrink when it was new. In contrast, an old piece of clothing had already done its shrinking and did not continue to shrink. However, a new piece of cloth would shrink if it was used to patch the old piece of clothing. That would cause a larger tear in the old clothing.

The second illustration was similar. New wineskins will stretch when the juice from grapes that was placed in the wineskins begins to expand as it turns to wine. In contrast, old wineskins have lost their ability to stretch and cannot expand when the juice begins to turn to wine. As a result, the wineskins will break instead and everything in the wineskin will be spilled on the ground. Jesus used these two illustrations to show that he did not come to try and patch the religion of the scribes and Pharisees, because they had developed a religion based on the traditions handed down from the fathers and did not teach true faith in God. Matthew 23:15 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” This verse made it very clear to the Pharisees that their religion based on keeping the traditions and rules of the fathers could not save. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Works cannot save. Any religion based on works is only a doorway to hell.

The scribes and Pharisees were not happy with the things Jesus taught. They began to look for

every excuse to criticize and condemn Jesus. Mark 2:23-24 says, “Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’” As a result, the Pharisees watched Jesus and His disciples as they walked on a path through the grainfields on their way to the synagogue. The disciples were hungry and began to break off heads of grain so they could eat the grain. This was in agreement with the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 23:24-25 says, “When you come into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.” Here, we see that they could pick and eat grapes or heads of wheat to satisfy their hunger. However, they were not to pick for the purpose of selling some of the crop to others.

As a result, the disciples were not breaking the Old Testament law. Instead, they were breaking a tradition of the Rabbis. Luke 6:1 says, “Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate *them*, rubbing *them* in *their* hands.” The tradition of the Rabbis taught that rubbing the grain in the hands was a form of threshing, and so, the Pharisees taught that such work was forbidden on the Sabbath. For the Pharisees to tell Jesus that His disciples were doing something that was not lawful on the Sabbath meant that these Pharisees felt that their traditions were of equal authority with the Word of God. Many religions, and even churches, make this same error today, because they feel that their traditions are just as important as the Word of God. Such teaching is false teaching.

Jesus chose to show that such teaching about tradition is false teaching by answering the Pharisees with an illustration from the Old Testament. Mark 2:25-28 says, “But He said to them, “‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God *in the days* of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?’” And He said to them, “‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.’” Here, Jesus gave an illustration that the best way to answer false teaching is to answer such teaching from the Word of God.

Jesus took His illustration from 1 Samuel 21:1-6. In 1 Samuel 21:3-5, we read, “‘Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give *me* five *loaves* of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found.’” And the priest answered David and said, ‘*There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women.*’ Then David answered the priest, and said to him, ‘Truly, women *have been* kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day.’” These verses show that the need was that the young men with David were hungry. The priest said that he did not have any common bread, because the only bread he had was the loaves that had been on the table of showbread.

The table of showbread had twelve loaves of bread placed on it. Those loaves represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Each week, the twelve loaves were replaced with twelve new loaves of

fresh bread. As a result, the only bread the priest had at the time David came to him was the twelve loaves which had just been taken off the table of showbread. That bread was considered holy bread, because it had been on the table of showbread. Normally, the holy bread was only eaten by the priests. Leviticus 24:8-9 says, “Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute.” The priest gave this bread to David for his men. The Bible does not condemn the action of the priest, because God used his actions to meet a need when David and the men with him were very hungry.

Then, Jesus explained the purpose of the Sabbath to the Pharisees. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Here, we see that God set aside the Sabbath as a day of rest because He knew that mankind would need a day of rest. Genesis 2:2 says, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.” God did not need to rest, but He rested as an example for us, because He knew that we would need a day of rest.

However, we see that God had an even greater rest planned than the Sabbath. Hebrews 4:9-11 says, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.” Only true believers who are the people of God are able to enter into this greater rest. Our salvation is not based on anything we did to earn our salvation. Instead, our salvation is totally the result of the work of Christ for us on the cross. As Christ hung on the cross, He cried out, “It is finished,” and the payment for our salvation was complete. Because we have entered into that rest, Hebrews 4:16 tells us, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We have rest because we have peace with God through Christ.

Jesus told the Pharisees one other thing as He spoke to them that day. Mark 2:28 says, “Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” That title, “Son of Man”, was very important because of what Jesus had said earlier to some of these same Pharisees. Mark 2:10-11 says, “‘But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” Jesus had shown that He is the Son of Man and He is God who has the power to forgive sins. Here, Jesus said that as the Son of Man, He is also the Lord of the Sabbath. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain the fact that Jesus is the Son of Man who is God. He is the One who makes it possible for us to come to the Father with boldness. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this key fact to others.