

1. In 2:23-26, when the Pharisees criticize Jesus' disciples for plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath, Jesus asks them a question: "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" Why does Jesus use this example, and what does it reveal about the relationship between God's law, human need, and the purpose of religious observance? (See Matt. 12:7 and Deut. 23:25.) Do we sometimes prioritize religious rules, traditions, or expectations over compassion for people in genuine need? Consider how we can honor God's commandments while also reflecting his mercy and concern for human well-being.
2. Having drawn attention to David's actions in the Old Testament in order to get them thinking about these things, Jesus now answers their question, saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." How do these two statements clarify both the purpose of the Sabbath and the reality and character of Jesus' authority? What implications does his declaration have for our understanding of his identity and mission? How then shall we understand and approach the Lord's Day? Why is our observance of Sabbath rest so important to God that he includes it in the Ten Commandments?
3. In 3:1-3, Jesus again enters the synagogue, where he encounters a man with a withered hand. And we read that "they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him." Why does Jesus, knowing the hostility of those who are observing him, proceed to bring the man into the center of the gathering ("Come here"), rather than heal him privately? What does this confrontation reveal about the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders?
4. In 3:4-6, we read of Jesus' exchange with the Pharisees, his healing of the man's hand, and their anger at him for daring to do so on the Sabbath. He asks them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" Why does Jesus frame the issue in these terms? How does this question expose the fundamental spiritual problem with the Pharisaic interpretation of the Sabbath? Then, confronted by their refusal to respond to his question, we read that Jesus "looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart." Indeed, when they saw that Jesus restored the man's hand, their response was neither to rejoice nor to wonder at the miraculous healing, but to hold counsel with the Herodians for how they might destroy Jesus. What is the significance of the contrast between his act of restoring life and their determination to destroy him?