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M I N I S T R I E S

"The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below."

The Sabbath: A Day of Healing

The gospels record several different instances of Yeshua—Jesus—healing people on the Sabbath (e.g., Mark 1:21-28; 29:31; 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; 9:1-41). Some Christian teachers have interpreted these Sabbath healings as evidence that Yeshua had come to do away with the Sabbath. For instance, Christian pastor and theologian, John MacArthur, writes this:

Jesus appears to have chosen the Sabbath day for His healing purposely, because it struck a blow at this symbol. Jesus is announcing the end of the Sabbath.

-John MacArthur, "Understanding the Sabbath," *Grace to You*. www.gty.org

We would agree with Pastor MacArthur that Yeshua chose the Sabbath for his healing miracles purposely. But his point was not to announce that the Sabbath was coming to an end. On the contrary, Yeshua's Sabbath healings demonstrate the proper way *to keep* the Sabbath. Like the Old Testament prophets, Yeshua condemns the misuse of the Sabbath day and calls God's people to observe the Sabbath according to its original purpose.

Let's look at one of the accounts of Yeshua healing someone on the Sabbath:

Luke 13:10-17

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus [Yeshua] saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus [Yeshua] had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things

that were done by him.

There are a couple of things worth pointing out here. First, the ruler of the synagogue interpreted Yeshua's healing as "work," and thus a violation of the Sabbath. Religious leaders accusing Yeshua of transgressing the Sabbath is a common theme in these healing accounts (Luke 6:6-11; John 5:16; 9:16). In one account, the Pharisees directly ask Yeshua if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath. They asked this question for the sole purpose of having a reason to accuse Yeshua of wrongdoing (Matthew 12:9-14). According to the later rabbinic literature, healing on the Sabbath was discouraged unless the illness was life-threatening (m.*Yoma* 8.6; m.*Shabbat* 14.3; 22:6). Based on what we see in the New Testament healing narratives, it seems like this was the perspective held by many of the religious leaders in Yeshua's time. However, the Torah itself does not prohibit healing or helping someone on the Sabbath. That is a man-made restriction. The Mishnah, a collection of Rabbinic interpretations of the Torah, records many of these man-made restrictions (e.g., m.*Shabbat*). But again, the Scriptures themselves do not say that healing someone on the Sabbath is wrong.

The second thing worth pointing out is that Yeshua defends his actions, not by saying that the Sabbath no longer should be observed, but by explaining why his actions did not violate the Sabbath at all. He does this by employing a *kal v'chomer* argument. *Kal v'chomer* means "light and heavy," and it's the name of a principle for determining Torah application in Judaism. The basic idea is that if something applies in a less important case (a lighter matter), then it will also apply in a more important case (a heavier matter). Yeshua argues from a premise on which his audience would agree—that is, it's permissible to untie an ox or donkey on the Sabbath. From there, he concludes that it's obviously okay, therefore, to "untie" a woman from her disability on the Sabbath, since a daughter of Abraham is more important than an animal. He makes a similar argument in Matthew when he heals the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath:

Matthew 12:11-12

He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

If Yeshua was announcing the end of the Sabbath by healing people, his response to accusations that he violated the Sabbath seems strange. He literally makes a case for why his actions were *permissible*—why they did *not* violate the Sabbath. Why did Yeshua defend his actions using a standard Jewish argument for determining Torah application if the Sabbath no longer mattered? Yeshua's response is simply not what we would expect from someone announcing the end of the Sabbath. But it *is* what we would expect from someone who was correcting false doctrines and restoring the Sabbath's true purpose.

This leads to our next point: Yeshua's teachings on the Sabbath closely resemble the teachings of the Old Testament Prophets.

Like some passages in the New Testament, there are Old Testament passages that could be misinterpreted as an attack on Sabbath observance if we miss the point of the message. For instance, Isaiah goes so far as to declare that God "hated" the Sabbath and feast days (Isaiah 1:13-14). Obviously, God does not actually hate his own holy days that he commanded his people to observe, just like he doesn't actually hate prayer (Isaiah 1:15). But he did hate it when his people prayed or observed these days while having corrupt hearts. In other words, he hates religious hypocrisy—that is, putting on an

insincere religious show while disobeying God and neglecting to show love toward one's neighbor. This is why Isaiah's rebuke includes an appeal to...

Isaiah 1:16-17

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Again, God hates religious hypocrisy. What good is Sabbath observance, prayer, singing worship songs, and making offerings at the Temple if it is all done without repentance? God rejects such expressions of worship when our hearts are far from him.

From Isaiah's perspective, true worship, including Sabbath observance, must be done with a pure desire to love God *and* our neighbor, which is why Isaiah emphasizes seeking justice for others in his rebuke. But once again, Isaiah's emphasis on repentance and justice does not negate the importance of God's holy days. After all, elsewhere in Isaiah, the prophet admonishes God's people *to observe* the Sabbath (Isaiah 56:1-8; 58:13). His point is that acts of justice and righteousness *must accompany* our Sabbath observance:

Isaiah 56:1-2

Thus says the Lord [YHWH]: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

Yeshua agreed with this sentiment wholeheartedly. In fact, that appears to be his entire point in these healing narratives. Yeshua's Sabbath observance included healing and ministering to the hurting and oppressed. And also like the Old Testament prophets, Yeshua constantly rebuked Israel's religious leaders for their hypocrisy. In Matthew 23, he condemns the Pharisees for neglecting what he calls the weightier matters of the Torah. But notice that he doesn't negate the lighter matters of the Torah in his emphasis of the weightier matters:

Matthew 23:23

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Like Isaiah, Yeshua taught that true Torah observance must be fueled by love for God and our neighbor. Otherwise, it isn't genuine Torah observance. It's just a religious show. And that's what Yeshua's Sabbath healings were intended to announce—not an end to the Sabbath, but rather an end to religious hypocrisy. He calls for an end to neglecting those in our communities who are hurting. He says to stop turning the Sabbath day into a tool of oppression through anti-biblical, man-made restrictions.

Yeshua reminds us that the Sabbath is a day intended to bring rest and healing. It is a day made for man's benefit (Mark 2:27). And according to Yeshua, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12). In fact, doing good on the Sabbath is precisely what God expects of us. That's what the Sabbath is all about—it's a symbol of the ultimate rest and healing that we will enjoy in the world to come when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes and death and pain will be no more (Revelation 21:4).

What are you doing to make sure your Sabbath observance reflects that future reality? What are you doing to wipe away the tears of those who are hurting in your community? What are you doing to ease the pain and suffering of others? As people who love and keep the Sabbath day, let's walk in the footsteps of our Savior, living out everything that this day is meant to symbolize.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverthing.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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