

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

August 18, 2019

“Interpretive Authority”

8:00 ~ Service - Communion is for all Christians

9:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school

10:30 ~ Service with the King's Kid's - Communion is for all Christians

NEWS

Church Camp August 23rd to the 25th

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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- 1) Do we need to clarify and further define God's Commands? Who has that authority?
- 2) Should Christians observe Saturday Sabbath? Is Sunday the new day of rest?
- 3) How much of what you know about the Bible and Christianity is just a human extrapolation?

MATTHEW 12:1-8 ~ ¹NAS^B 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. ²But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” ³But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, ⁴how 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.”

If you think you already know the answer...

Beyond that, you will _____ confirmation bias. Proverbs 26:12.

The Disciples satiated their hunger in a perfectly acceptable way, every day except _____. Deuteronomy 23:25, Exodus 20:8-11, 31:12-17.

As an example, could a person walk on the Sabbath? If so, how far? If not, what was allowed instead? It was never a question of activity versus inactivity, it was always a question of the acceptable _____ of activity and who had the _____ to draw that line.

In both examples the rules are set aside, because something more important than the rules takes _____. That's the key.

He said, "Something greater than the temple is here." The "Something," is the _____ in Christ. Hebrews 4.

Twice He said to them, "Have you not read." The problem with the religious elite wasn't that they didn't know what Scripture _____, it was that they didn't have a clue what it _____. II Timothy 3:7.

They knew all about God, but they did not know God. John 8:19.

Then Jesus said, what He repeatedly said in His Sermon on the Mount, "But I say." The Son of Man will give the correct _____.

God didn't establish the Sabbath to make His children's lives harder; it was to make them better. Because He is _____, and He _____ - it was a day for that.

If all the _____ and all the _____ hang on the two Love Commands now... It always did. How could they miss that?

Can you see why the religious leaders took such offence? Jesus insulted their interpretive skills. He usurped their interpretive authority. He was claiming to be Almighty God's _____ interpreter.

An important point, not only for abolishing legalism, but for simultaneously abolishing the _____.

It isn't for us to decide how we will approach Saturday, or Sunday, or rest in general. It is for us to see how _____ wants us to approach them.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Someone might say, “God gave a command here and we must figure out the boundaries.” Really? The way to obey God is to further _____ what He said?

Instead of trying to further define what God was happy to leave undefined, Jesus said look at the intent behind the Law. Mark 2:27, Hosea 6:6, Luke 6:36.

MATTHEW 12:9-14 ~ ⁹NASB Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him. ¹¹And He said to them, “What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²“How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

This is the second half of the same basic episode. The Sabbath was made by God so His people could stop their daily _____ and remember Him.

It was a day for doing good, because God is good. A day to think of _____ and to think of _____ - to fellowship and to worship and to pray and to hear His Word.

Check all that apply – detach and place in the offering or the prayer box

_____ I want to talk with the pastor about _____

_____ I want prayer for _____

_____ I want to volunteer to _____

_____ I want more information about _____

_____ Other _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 12a ~ 081819

Welcome Friends

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW
A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship



Matthew 12:1-8 ~ 1NASBA 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. 2But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.” 3But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, 4how 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.”

It started off with “At that time,” indicating a close connection with what came before. Remember that the previous passage, starting in 11:25, began with those exact same words, “At that time.”



In verse 25 Jesus had thanked the “Lord of Heaven and earth,” for hiding the Truth from the “Wise and intelligent.” Here, in this passage, the Pharisees are shown to be those very people. The “Wise and intelligent.” At least in their own eyes and by the standards of man. Puffed up in their own understanding. In love with their own ideas, interpretations and opinions. Unwilling to consider any other view. They were, like so many people through the centuries, up to and including this very day, intransigent, stiff-necked and unteachable.

If you think you already know the answer, you’re not interested in learning anything different. Beyond that,

you will inevitably suffer from confirmation bias, where everything you see is filtered through the lens of your dogmatic belief.

That's the reason that every time Trump fires off a Tweet, no matter what the content, some people sincerely applaud him, while others, just as genuinely, vilify him. Please, don't be like that - please have a teachable disposition. It is only possible if you are humble enough to realize you may not know everything and everything may not be as you assume.

In my experience, it is far easier to reach a person who doesn't know, than one who knows wrongly. The Bible confirms that in Proverbs 26:12, 12Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. The point? The Pharisees made themselves unable to accept anything or anyone outside of their expectation.

What I want you to see, is that we do that all the time. We hold a position and we're unwilling to budge. We become so certain of our ideas about how it all must be, that I often wonder if Jesus came here incognito, if we would react to Him any better than the Pharisees before us.



Back to our passage, let's set the stage. It was Saturday morning. Church day for them. Jesus and His disciples were, for some reason, outside of a town, and so, they had to travel a bit in order to worship at the local Synagogue.

Their path took them along the edge of a grainfield. Walking through the fringes was perfectly acceptable, while blowing through the middle was, and still is, basically vandalism.

The Disciples were hungry, they probably skipped breakfast to avoid being late for church - has that ever happened to you? Well, evidently, it happened to them.

As they walked, they were breaking off heads of grain, rubbing them between the palms of their hands to extract the grain, and then eating the fruit of their labor.

It was not only legal; it was a common practice that was established by God. Farmers were required by Old Testament Law to allow such harvesting around the edges of their fields.

No one was supposed to take from the middle, nor was anyone to gather and stockpile, but picking from the perimeter and eating the grain on the spot was fine (Deuteronomy 23:25). Every day of the week, except Saturday - the Holy Sabbath.



It was seen as harvesting and threshing, which is, of course, work. Exodus 20:8-11..., the Fourth Commandment - Third, if you're Samaritan, Catholic, or Lutheran, states: 8NlrV“Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy. 9Do all of your work in six days. 10But the seventh day is a Sabbath in honor of the Lord your God. Do not do any work on that day. The same command applies to your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and your animals. It also applies to any outsiders who live in your cities. 11In six days I made the heavens and the earth. I made the oceans and everything in them. But I rested on the seventh day. So I blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

It is the longest, most well-defined Commandment in the Decalogue. Compared to other Commandments like, “Thou shalt not kill,” or “Thou shalt not steal,” it’s downright wordy. Exodus 31:12-17, elaborates, 12NIVThen the Lord said to Moses, 13“Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy. 14“ ‘Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death; those who do any work on that day must be cut off from their people. 15For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death. 16The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. 17It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.’”

As an example, could a person walk on the Sabbath? Obviously, a little walking must be okay. Walking from your bed to the outhouse would seem reasonable. Walking to the Synagogue to worship must be alright.

Walking 30 miles would probably be quite unreasonable on a day God orders rest. It was never a question of activity versus inactivity, it was always a question of the acceptable degree of activity and who had the authority to draw that line.

The Rabbis of Jesus' day defined a Sabbath Day's Walk as 2,000 cubits, or about 6/10 of a mile. It is unlikely that Jesus was violating that tradition on this occasion, or it would have added fuel to the fire.

It is probable that Jesus and His disciples started their journey within 1,000 yards of the Synagogue. Therefore, it is likely that the Pharisees observed the Disciple's actions from the Synagogue steps, watching the events unfolding as the group got closer.

When they arrived, the Pharisees confronted Jesus - they didn't chastise the guys - they confronted their Master. Jesus was held responsible for His disciples' actions and He willingly accepted that responsibility. Jesus didn't try to shift the blame. He didn't try to minimize or mitigate their actions either.



From here, people get lost in the argument. The reason? They easily lose sight of the context, getting bogged down in the incident involving David and the reality that ministers obviously work on the day of no work and they try to rationalize how the disciples hunger was sufficiently great to somehow be equated with David's life or death situation and with Priestly duties ordained by God.

Jesus' argument is easy to understand as long as you don't miss the forest for the trees. The argument works like this... In both examples, the rules are set aside, because something more important than the rules

takes precedence. That's the key to understanding Jesus' point.

You tell your kid to go to her room until you give her permission to come out. The house catches on fire. Can your child violate your rule about staying in her room? There's something more important.



Jesus cited two similar cases from Scripture - then He said, "Something greater than the temple is here." The "Something," is the "Kingdom of Heaven" He was ushering in. It is the "Easy yoke and light burden," He promised. It is the "Rest," in Christ and so, it is life in Jesus as His disciple and as the Father's child.

My friends, it is a new Sabbath Rest in Salvation. Hebrews chapter 4 tells us as much. The passage says that the person who has been Saved has entered God's Sabbath rest, indicating that such is the fulfillment of God's original Old Testament intent. Verse 10 there says, "The one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His." The next verse says we must "Be diligent to enter into that rest."

"Diligently," zealously, eagerly, conscientiously, make every effort, to what? To enter into "Rest." It seems odd. But an active, intentional faith in Christ results in a cessation of works in order to be accepted by God, because it is resting in Christ's work for that acceptance.

The Pharisees accusing Jesus wouldn't have been able to follow that argument and so Jesus gave them an easier way to see it.



Twice He said to them, “Have you not read.” It was incredibly insulting. Essentially, you guys are supposed to be the experts on Scripture, but you’re so wrong in your understanding... Is it because you “Have not read,” the Scripture at all?

Now, obviously, Jesus’ argument doesn’t work if the Pharisees were not well acquainted with both examples. He knew that they were familiar with the material. In fact, He knew that they had read, and heard, and studied, those things in detail.

As I said earlier, the problem with the religious elite wasn’t that they didn’t know what Scripture said, it was

that they didn't have a clue what it meant. In that, they were ignorant. They were, like so many before them, and like so many since, "Always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth" (II Timothy 3:7).

Jesus was saying, you "Wise and intelligent" men with full access to the Holy Revelation of God, how dumb can you be, not to get what God wants from you? In another place Jesus equates their misunderstanding of God's intent to the fact that they don't know Him.

Oh, they knew all about God, but they did not know God. They knew all about the Word of God, but they didn't know the Word of God. Not the one rolled up in a scroll and not the one standing in front of them. It's the same today, many know about Jesus, but few know Jesus. Jesus said, "If you knew Me, you would know My Father also" (John 8:19).

If the Pharisees had truly known the written Word, they would have known the Father and then they would have recognized Jesus as the Word made flesh, Immanuel.

Jesus essentially said to them, while you do not grasp it, you've heard it said... And then Jesus said, what He repeatedly said in His Sermon on the Mount, "But I say." You've heard it said, "But I say."



The argument is now made more explicit for them. God established the Sabbath rest, not to make people's lives harder - not for a reason to dog men and punish them, but to help them - to help even their animals. Because God cares - it was a day for caring.

If all the Law and all the Prophets hang on these two things and always have - how could you not heal your brother?

That is the way it should have been interpreted. Jesus said, as the Son of Man - Who is by very definition God with you as flesh and blood - God become Man - as the Living Word of God, I will give you the correct interpretation of Me. The correct understanding as to what violates and what does not violate Me. Because the "Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Can you see why the religious leaders took such offence?

Not only was Jesus insulting their interpretive skills - He was usurping their interpretive authority. Not only was Jesus usurping their authority to set the boundaries for God, He was claiming that right exclusively for Himself - He was blatantly claiming to be Almighty God's sole interpreter.

This is important, not only for abolishing legalism, but for simultaneously abolishing the opposite. The opposing ditch of antinomianism, license and liberty where God's commands can simply be ignored is as wrong as legalism. Specifically, many people take this passage as giving them authorization to interpret God's Word as it suits them.

Love God. Love others. Does not mean you can throw out everything in the Bible that doesn't suit you. It doesn't mean you get to be the arbiter of what love for God and love for others looks like.

Make no mistake about it, Jesus was saying that He and He alone can interpret God's intention. We study to discover Jesus' interpretation, not to come to our own.

I hope you can see the distinction. It isn't for us to decide how we will approach Saturday, or Sunday, or rest in general... It is for us to see how Jesus wants us to approach such things.



So, a typical person examining the Sabbath Commandment, with the intent to obey, quickly wants further clarification. Even though it is the most clarified Commandment, it still begs the question, what exactly can I, and can't I, do?

Since Moses brought the Tablets down from the mountain, people have been asking that question. The Rabbis, regarding just this one little ole command, out of the 613 commands they recognize in the Old Testament, came up with 39 separate categories of work and volume after volume of examples and exclusions. It is still debated today. after 35 centuries.

At issue, is what constitutes work and who gets to decide? Even the question of what the Sabbath is, had to be answered. The Rabbis formally established the Sabbath as the only day of the week that has 25 hours in it, adding a bit to the front and back, just to make sure no one accidentally violates the day.

In our natural proclivity to quantify and qualify everything, we legalistically draw lines in the sand and then to make certain we don't cross them we make another line even further back. These are lines that make absolutely no sense in certain circumstances.

Rob, Nora and I, went on a day hike to do some fly fishing some years ago. Rob parked his truck and then placed his closed cooler under the truck so the ice would last longer in the shade. When we got back, Ranger Rick, was there to greet us. He was all a twitter that he had some criminals to confront. The crime? Rob left the closed cooler outside of the vehicle. Rob protested saying, look inside - there's no food in there. That cut no ice with the ranger because, the cooler had at some previous point had food items stored in it - a bear could still smell the residual traces of that long since disposed food. Please understand, that it was of no concern to him whatsoever that we had hiked all the

way to the lake with lunch in our backpacks. It was of no concern to him whatsoever that we and had just hiked all the way back to the truck with a string of freshly caught fish. It was of no concern to him whatsoever that we were now going to transfer the fresh fish to the cooler. It was of no concern to him whatsoever that the rig, that had been parked there for hours, had a truck bed, open to the world, that had been used to transport numerous dead and bloody deer, elk and antelope, out of the woods. Not to mention, frequently transporting household trash, including rotten food to the dump. His sole concern was a closed cooler, without any food in it at all, placed under the vehicle. When Rob objected, the ranger made it clear that he was fully prepared for a Ruby Ridge shootout if necessary, to make his point.

Legalism is always dumb. It's because it eliminates common sense in favor of rigid rules.

As I've said many times, it is impossible to make a black and white rule for every possible eventuality - yet we try.

Someone might object and say, look God gave a command here and even though He clarified it more

than any other Commandment in the Decalogue, we still need to define it further, if we are going to take God seriously and obey Him. We got to figure out what's acceptable and what's not.

Really? The way to obey God is to further restrict what He said? Satan used that tactic so effectively on Eve in the Garden of Eden that she began doing it herself. Making God's commands more restrictive than He made them is not only blasphemous - it is human.



How did Jesus approach the problem? Instead of trying to further define what God was happy to leave

undefined, Jesus said look at the intent behind the Law.

Why did God give the 613 Laws? What was it behind those Laws, what was it behind this specific Law? Jesus said in Mark 2:27, 27bNASB “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”

Every Law was made for man - never man for the Law. Man was never met to serve the Law legalistically; Man was meant to obey God as their Heavenly Father relationally.

It is a monumental misnomer that God wants us to pray, to worship, to sacrifice, to obey, to do anything for His benefit... God needs nothing. It is for our benefit!

The principle was that one day in seven was to be a day of rest - a day devoted to recharging for the next week. When it is understood as a principle, rather than a regulation, we don't need to waste time, effort and words defining the parameters - we simply need to obey God's intent from a sincere heart.

As I said, when we view it that way, not only does it eliminate legalism, it also eliminates the other side of that coin as well.

Obey God from a Holy Spirit filled heart that loves Him and loves others and the list of dos and don'ts become unnecessary. In the Marine Corps I used to tell guys, "Let your conscience be your guide." It works in this case too, if your conscience is informed by God's Breath.

Jesus rounds it out with a quote from Hosea 6:6
6NirV "I want mercy and not sacrifice. I want you to recognize me as God instead of bringing me burnt offerings." As Jesus said in Luke 6:36, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." That brings us to the rest of the story...



Matthew 12:9-14 ~ 9Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. 10And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him. 11And He said to them, “What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? 12“How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” 13Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. 14But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

This is the second half of the same basic episode. The opening is often taken as Jesus traveling on from there and so indicating a new section. It just means that Jesus left the Pharisees and went into the building. It gives the sense of Him making His statements and then just walking on up the steps and into the Synagogue. I imagine that they were all left standing there blankly looking at each with their mouths gaping open, wondering what just happened.



Right away they have a fresh opportunity to challenge Jesus. There's no doubt more to the story. Matthew is famous for leaving out any detail that doesn't directly pertain to Jesus and the issue of concern. Whatever

the particulars, the Pharisees regrouped and confronted Jesus again. This time they pose a question. There are two types of questions.

I get both kinds on a regular basis myself. The first kind, that any pastor is happy to answer, is a question seeking information. The second kind, that makes all pastors cringe, is the type the Pharisees asked Jesus. It is an accusation wrapped up in a question. It is always posed as a test to see if you have the answer, they have already decided is the only correct one. As an example, when a person asks me what translation of the Bible I use, it is almost always a test. Any answer other than, “Well, the King James, of course!” is the wrong answer and I’ve failed their test. I’m unworthy to be their pastor and most likely not Saved at all. The Pharisees are looking for Jesus to give them the wrong answer.

In their expansion of the Sabbath Commandment the Pharisees allowed for a person to be healed on the Sabbath only if the ailment was immediately life threatening. They specifically said the person could wait until the next day otherwise. As far as Rabbinic interpretation, there was only one right answer to the question.

Jesus was brilliant in His response - as usual. He looked around at the group of locals who were drawn to the confrontation... The relatively poor rural folks who eked out their living from the land.



Jesus' rhetorical question was directed to them, not the Pharisees. Jesus asked them, if your one and only sheep, your entire family flock, is in a situation where it will be injured, or further hurt, or even killed, will wait a day to help? Theory is fine, practicality is practicality. Of course, none of them is going to watch a large portion of the wealth and future livelihood go down the drain.

Jesus now had the congregation on His side. His argument from the lesser to the greater is simple. His second question is a rhetorical statement and makes His point. The Sabbath wasn't given by God to complicate people's lives. To give them onerous and burdensome regulations leading to nonsensical conundrums. It wasn't to see if a poor family with only one sheep would let it die to prove their obedience.

The Sabbath was made by God so His people could stop the daily grind and remember that He never intended people to live to work, but to work to live.



It was a day for doing good, because God is good. A

day to think of Him and to think of others - to fellowship and to worship and to pray and to hear His Word.

Of course, Jesus healed the man. The Pharisees just watched Jesus miraculously restore a man's useless hand in the Synagogue on the Sabbath and the only thing they can think about is their hurt pride and their unmet expectations.

They plotted His death. Destroy is okay, I guess, but the intention was to kill Him. The NET renders verse 14 as 14NETBut the Pharisees went out and plotted against him, as to how they could assassinate him.

In their view Jesus broke the Commandment and the penalty was death. It never occurred to them that what He actually violated was only their human extrapolation of the Commandment.

How often do we see that in Christianity today? A person violates our interpretation of Christianity and we assume that they are sinning.

For us, our Sabbath is our Salvation and yet, since God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, doesn't it stand to reason that the principle of

dedicating one day a week to Him, to rest, to family and friends, to doing good, is as important today as then?