

THE SON OF MAN IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

Paul N. Wanamaker, Pastor, The Evangelical Congregational Church of Easton, MA
Reformed Congregational Fellowship Pastors' Conference, April 12-14, 2016

Introduction:

The Hebrew recipients of the letter by that name were in the greatest of dangers. They were on the verge of apostatizing from the faith. Perhaps under pressure from their Jewish countrymen, they were being tempted to again embrace and practice the old Mosaic covenant given to Israel at Mount Sinai. The writer warned them, "Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much more worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"¹ To do this would be to essentially deny Jesus Christ's fulfillment of all that was shadowed and typified in that old covenant. He reminded them of Jeremiah's prophecy, "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah", and he added, "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete."²

Under the old covenant there was to be a rest in the promised land of Canaan. But that rest was incomplete and was merely a type of the eternal inheritance, or future "rest" that these Hebrews were in danger of forfeiting if there would be in any of them "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."³ Unbelief characterized that generation of Israelites that were delivered out of Egypt, and God swore in His wrath that they would not enter the "rest" of Canaan.⁴ Using that example of the terrible consequences of unbelief, the writer warned his readers "that since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it... 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.' For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day."⁵

It is that eternal rest, typified by the promised land of Canaan, which has been secured for true believers by Jesus Christ in His accomplished work of redemption. As such, the writer concluded, "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God", for those who patiently persevere in their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

¹ Hebrews 10.28-29

² Ibid, 8.8, *all Scripture quotations from the NKJV unless otherwise noted*

³ Ibid, 3.12

⁴ Ibid, 4.3

⁵ Ibid, vv. 1, 7-8

It is that rest which we understand to be that eternal Sabbath rest in the life to come which believers in this life have a preview and taste of as they obediently remember and observe the Sabbath each first day of the week. We read that after six days of creating work, God “rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”⁶ It is therefore not insignificant that Jesus Himself, the Mediator of the new covenant, proclaimed that “The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”⁷

It is instructive that Jesus did not say “God is Lord of the Sabbath”, or that “the Son of God is Lord of the Sabbath”, but instead referred to Himself as the “Son of Man” who is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus often used this expression of self-identification, which for some raised the question, “Who is this Son of Man?”⁸ Clearly, Jesus was not only attesting to the fact of His incarnation in that He had a human nature, but He was also mindful of Daniel’s vision who “was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.”⁹ This remarkable scene is certainly no portrayal of any ordinary son of fallen Adam able to come into the presence of God Himself, the Ancient of Days, for “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...”¹⁰ Only the Man Jesus can answer to these qualifications of purity. And the fact that He comes with the clouds of heaven testifies to His divinity. Only God comes this way. Clearly, this vision is a heavenly scene picturing the ascension of the risen God-Man, Jesus Christ, entering into heaven and appearing before God the Father after completing His great work of redemption on earth. The scene is expanded upon in the Revelation where one of the elders exclaims upon Christ’s appearance, “Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David...”¹¹ And John saw that “in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”¹²

Daniel’s vision goes further, portraying the Son of Man being given “dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”¹³ It is in the context of Daniel’s vision where the Son of Man is being glorified, rewarded and given all authority that Jesus rightly appropriated that title of Son of Man for Himself as Lord of the Sabbath. That authority would be His glorious reward for ultimately ushering in the eternal Sabbath rest. It might be thought that Jesus prematurely made that proclamation regarding His Lordship of the Sabbath since the cross, death, the grave and the resurrection still lay ahead of Him in time. But it is His divinity which transcends time and space which provides warrant for Him to make this glorious declaration regarding Himself. In the eternal counsel of God, it is accomplished. Indeed therefore, God’s marvelous and gracious

⁶ Exodus 20.11

⁷ Mark 2.28; Luke 6.5

⁸ John 12.34

⁹ Daniel 7.13

¹⁰ Psalm 24.3,4

¹¹ Revelation 5.5

¹² v.6

¹³ Daniel 7.14

condescension in subjecting His eternal counsel to be worked out within the dimensions of time and space in the Person and work of Son of God in the flesh is to be admired, and be the source of wonder, praise and thanksgiving for all time.

As we examine Chapter 22 of the Savoy Declaration, "Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath-Day", and in light of the above, it is appropriate to pursue several avenues of inquiry regarding this claim by Jesus Christ that He as the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Amongst these several are firstly, an inquiry into how the Son of Man came to be the Lord of the Sabbath, and then secondly, how was this Lordship of the Son of Man demonstrated in His earthly ministry?

How Did the Son of Man, Christ Jesus, Attain this Title, Lord of the Sabbath?

The work of redemption given Christ to do by the Father is summarized in the letter to the Hebrews where we read that Jesus Christ "is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."¹⁴ The first covenant, or Mosaic covenant, was given exclusively to the ancient Israelites. However its moral implications, summarized in the Ten Commandments, are applicable to all of fallen mankind. Therefore the redemption provided by Christ for the transgressions under the first covenant applies equally to transgressions under the previously inaugurated covenant of works, which contains the identical moral mandates and is applicable to all men. God commanded Adam by "saying 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'."¹⁵ This commandment was meant to be a way for Adam to give expression of His love for God, heart, soul, mind and strength, as demonstrated in His obedience. Adam willfully disobeyed this command and "...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."¹⁶ Indeed, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."¹⁷

As such, Christ's earthly path to the attaining of His Lordship of the Sabbath began with His submission to the Father's gracious and merciful will, which was for the Son of God to accomplish the redemption, recovery and renewal, body and soul, of those out of all of fallen mankind through the ages that God had set His electing love upon. These elect would be ones chosen not out of anything in them that would commend them to a holy and righteous God, but out of immeasurable and everlasting love. They were chosen "before the foundation of the world"¹⁸, and they would be "a great multitude... of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues."¹⁹ It was the work which the Father had given Him to do and finish.²⁰ Concerning this work given

¹⁴ Hebrews 9.15

¹⁵ Genesis 2.16-17

¹⁶ Romans 5.12

¹⁷ v. 3.23

¹⁸ Ephesians 1.4

¹⁹ Revelation 7.9

²⁰ John 17.4

to the incarnate Son of God, the Apostle Paul wrote that Christ Jesus, “being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.”²¹ Thus the Son of God would take on a human nature, to become the Son of Man. It would not be God, or the Son of God, but Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, the Son of Man who would become the Lord of the Sabbath.

It is through the use of this self-designation that Jesus would describe His redemptive work. It is interesting and helpful that Mark records several instances of Jesus associating this title with His work of redemption. Mark records that, following His transfiguration, Jesus instructed His disciples to “tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”²² Confused, the disciples inquired concerning the prophesied coming of Elijah which would occur before the appearance of the Messiah.²³ At this point they knew Jesus as the Christ as evidenced by Peter’s earlier confession²⁴, but they reasoned that Elijah had not yet come, and yet the Christ had already come. Jesus clarified the prophecy concerning the coming of Elijah before the Messiah by helping them to see that it was John the Baptist who would fulfill that prophecy.²⁵ But He then further compounded their confusion by asking, “How is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt.”²⁶ They could not yet understand the meaning and purpose of the Christ’s suffering, dying, and rising from the dead. That was certainly evidenced when after having confessed Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”, Peter refused to accept what Jesus said about Himself that “He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”²⁷ Peter received a severe rebuke for what was essentially a denial of the very reason Jesus had come. Although Peter spoke in ignorance, Jesus brought out the seriousness of Peter’s, “far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”, by connecting his outburst to Satan’s agenda. Matthew records the emphatic nature of Christ’s response by stating that Jesus “turned” to Peter saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”²⁸ There’s irony in Peter addressing Jesus as Lord and then disconnecting that title from the redemptive work of Christ. That title would be the reward of His going to the cross, not from the bypassing of it. That’s what Satan wanted and it was the motive behind Satan tempting Jesus with “all of kingdoms of the world and their glory” if Jesus would only worship him. God had promised Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, with “the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for You possession”, but only upon the completion of His redemptive work in His obedience which included suffering, death and resurrection. Having become “obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross... God has highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should

²¹ Philippians 2.7-8

²² Mark 9.9

²³ Ibid, v.11

²⁴ Matthew 16.16, *Matthew records this confession as occurring prior to the disciple’s inquiry concerning Elijah in his parallel account of the event in 17.10-13*

²⁵ Matthew 17.13

²⁶ Mark 9.12

²⁷ Matthew 16.21

²⁸ v. 23

bow, of those in heaven, and those on the earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."²⁹

Interestingly, Christ's rebuke of Peter was an echo of His "Away with you Satan!"³⁰ rebuke to Satan at the conclusion of His being tempted in the wilderness. Christ, the Son of Man, would not assume the title Lord apart from a life of pristine obedience, the cross and His subsequent resurrection and ascension. In Paul's introduction in his letter to the Romans, he wrote concerning Jesus Christ that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."³¹ Paul was not referring there to the Son of God as He is the eternal God Son of God from all eternity. The resurrection would not be in any way necessary for the declaring of the Son of God to be the second Person of the Godhead. Instead, Paul was pointing to the incarnate Son of God in the resurrection of His physical body from the grave. On the cross Jesus exclaimed "'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."³² And it was finished in that Christ paid the debt in full that was due for the sins of God's people, and that debt was death, eternal death per God's warning to Adam: "...in the day that you eat of it (*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*) you shall surely die."³³ Further, Christ's death was such that the dominion of sin in the lives of God's people was taken away. To be sure, the remnants of sin would remain in the life of believers, and its influence would often times exert itself very powerfully, but sin would no longer be dominant. The Apostle Paul knew that influence of remaining sin and cried out "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?", but then answered his question with, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" As such he went on to write that "there is therefore no now condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. On account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh..."³⁴ In these verses, Paul was not referencing a believer's justification, but pointing to the on-going sanctification of the believer who is now enabled by the Holy Spirit to fulfill, albeit imperfectly, the "righteous requirement of the law" as he walks "according to the Spirit."³⁵ Augustus Toplady captured the essence of Christ's redemptive work on the cross by writing,

*Let the water and the blood
from Thy riven side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure,
cleansing me from its guilt and pow'r*³⁶

²⁹ Philippians 2.8-11

³⁰ Matthew 4.10

³¹ Romans 1.4

³² John 19.30

³³ Genesis 2.17, *parenthetical insert mine*

³⁴ Romans 7.24-25; 8.1-3

³⁵ vs. 4

³⁶ Augustus Toplady, *Rock of Ages*, Trinity Hymnal, Great Commission Publications, 1990, #499

Indeed it was finished as regards the guilt of sin and the power of sin, but there was more to come. Christ gave up His spirit or His soul, and thus His physical body and soul in His human nature became separated. Indeed, it was necessary that Jesus, the Son of Man, endure the final humiliation of this separation by having His body placed in a grave. Because of Adam's rebellion, God pronounced a curse on Adam's physical body. His work would be characterized by the sweat of his labor, and then God added, "till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."³⁷ And so, at the time of Christ's physical resurrection, He exhausted that final element of the curse. He arose bodily, and in so doing became "the firstfruits of those who have died. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead."³⁸ It was then that Christ entered into His Sabbath rest on that first day of the week. It was then that the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, in space and time became the Lord of the Sabbath having finished the work that God the Father gave Him to do.³⁹ The writer to the Hebrews wrote, "There remains a rest for the people of God. For He who has entered His rest has Himself also ceased from all His works as God did from His."⁴⁰ The puritan John Owen wrote concerning this verse that, "Expositors generally apply these words (*verse 10*) unto believers, and their entering into the rest of God..." However, Owen was convinced that the reference to the One who had entered His rest was a direct reference to Christ entering His rest following His resurrection. He first noted that the writer suddenly switched from the plural "the people" in verse 9 to the singular "He" in verse 10. Also, he wrote, "...supposing believers to be here intended, what are the works they are said to rest from? Their sins, say some; their labours, sorrows, and sufferings, say others; from these they rest in heaven. But how can they be said to rest from these works as God rested from His own? For God so rested from His as to take the greatest delight and satisfaction in them, to be refreshed by them... Indeed God's rest from and upon His works, besides a mere cessation of working, consisted principally in the satisfaction and complacency that He had in them. But now, if those mentioned be the works here intended, men cannot so rest from them as God did from His; but they cease from them with a detestation of them as far as they are sinful, and joy in their deliverance, from them as far as they are sorrowful."⁴¹ The rest in verse 10, Owen asserted, is "the rest of Christ from His works." Jesus Christ "... on account of His works and rest, is also Lord of the Sabbath, to abrogate one day of rest and to institute another."⁴² And so, having become Lord of the Sabbath and entering into His Sabbath rest, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, is the guarantee of the promised Sabbath rest for the elect that He came to save.

³⁷ Genesis 3.19

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 15.20-21

³⁹ John 17.4

⁴⁰ Hebrews 4.9-10

⁴¹ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1991, Volume XX, pp. 331-332, *parenthetical insert mine*

⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 332-333

Prior to the Cross and His Resurrection, How did the Son of Man demonstrate His Lordship of the Sabbath during His earthly ministry?

1. The Wilderness

The Son of Man's earthly public ministry was inaugurated at the time of His baptism. It was then that God the Father proclaimed, "You are My Son; in You I am well pleased."⁴³ John the Baptist bore witness to the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus Christ for the empowerment of Christ in His human nature for the redemptive work set before Him. "Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil."⁴⁴

There in the wilderness, Jesus, "the last Adam", would begin the fulfillment of what the first Adam failed to do which was to, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."⁴⁵ Further, G. K. Beale noted that "God experienced 'rest' on the seventh day, after He overcame chaos and established creational order (Gen. 2:2). And Adam himself is said to be 'caused to rest' in Eden (Gen. 2:21)... the likely intention of Gen. 2:3 is that Adam was to observe the Sabbath rest every seventh day as a token of the eternal, eschatological life and rest to come... If Adam is in God's image, then he should rest from his work, since God also had rested from His."⁴⁶

However, Beale continued with, "Eden was a temple in which Adam was placed as a living image of God and as God's priest who was to guard the sanctuary from unclean creatures. Thus, Adam did not rule well because he did not guard the garden, allowing entrance to a foul snake that brought sin, chaos, and disorder into the sanctuary and into Adam and Eve's life. He allowed the serpent to 'rule over' him rather than 'ruling over' it and, as an obedient priest, casting it out of the garden."⁴⁷ As such, Adam, having failed to exercise His God-given mandate to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion, forfeited what might have been an "unending eschatological 'rest'."⁴⁸ The Son of God came in the flesh, becoming the Son of Man to redeem the elect, and to recover the eschatological hope of the eternal Sabbath rest for God's people.

The beginning of that work of recovery by the Son of Man would not be in the garden, but in the wilderness of sin, chaos and disorder. There, Jesus, completely contrary to the actions of Adam, fully withstood the temptations of Satan. Essentially, Jesus was being tempted to exalt Himself without accomplishing the work of redemption. His Lordship over what Satan had

⁴³ Matthew 3.17; Mark 1.11; Luke 3.22

⁴⁴ Luke 4.1,2

⁴⁵ Genesis 1.28

⁴⁶ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, Baker Academic, 2011, pp. 39-40

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 45-46

⁴⁸ *Ibid* p. 39

stolen could only be secured by the cross and His resurrection. Only then would He receive His reward, glory and exaltation.

It would seem that Luke, in his account of this experience, was conscious of connecting Jesus with Adam by identifying Jesus as “the son of Adam”⁴⁹ just prior to his description of the wilderness temptation. When enticed to turn stones into bread to relieve His hunger, He declared, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”⁵⁰ Satan went on to tempt Jesus to throw Himself off of the pinnacle of the temple as a way of proving that He was the Son of God by quoting Psalm 91.11-12: “He shall give His angels charge over you, in their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” Interestingly, in the next verse of that same Psalm, which Satan conveniently did not quote, we read, “You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample under underfoot.” Later, after the seventy disciples returned from having been sent out by Christ, He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”, and added, “Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all power of the enemy...”⁵¹ This was a clear allusion to not only Psalm 91, but what God proclaimed in Genesis regarding the Seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the serpent.⁵² If we piece this all together, we can come to the understanding that Christ’s successful triumph over Satan in the wilderness was the inauguration of Satan’s ultimate defeat.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all follow their descriptions of Jesus in the wilderness with the accounts of the beginnings of Christ’s public ministry which included the announcement that the kingdom had come and Old Testament prophecies were being fulfilled. The words of Jesus to His disciples in Luke 10 above demonstrate that Christ’s earthly mission included the defeat of Satan, essentially beginning the transition of that mission to His disciples in anticipation of His ascension. Clearly, it was at the cross where Jesus dealt the mortal blow in the crushing of the serpent’s head, but the ongoing preaching of the gospel and making disciples continues the work of defeating Satan. This will culminate upon the Lord Jesus Christ’s second advent when the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...”⁵³ At that time, the wilderness of this world will become the greater garden and temple, and contrary to the presence of the serpent in Eden “there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”⁵⁴ What Adam did not do in protecting the temple of the garden and securing Sabbath rest for himself and all mankind, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, accomplished. And that victory began in space and time with the victory over Satan in the wilderness, thus demonstrating that the Son of Man is indeed Lord of the Sabbath.

⁴⁹ Luke 3.38

⁵⁰ Ibid, 4.4

⁵¹ Ibid, 10.18-19

⁵² Genesis 3.15

⁵³ Revelation 20.10

⁵⁴ Ibid, 21.27

2. The Synagogue at Nazareth

Luke records for us that after Christ's temptation in the wilderness, He went into the synagogue at Nazareth and "was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. When He had opened the book, He found the place where it is written:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."⁵⁵

We then read, that "he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant⁵⁶ and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'⁵⁷ The people in the synagogue knew Jesus as a fellow member of their town of Nazareth, but it's clear from Luke's previous verses 14 and 15 of chapter 4 that word had spread about His itinerant teaching in the surrounding synagogues of Galilee. As such, all apparently were giving rapt attention and were in eager anticipation as to what he would say regarding the text He read from Isaiah. Perhaps they thought He would look backwards in time to the glory days of God's mighty dealings with Israel, or maybe speak of future outworkings of God's promises. What a shock it must have been for them when He announced that "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." William Hendriksen wrote that Jesus was speaking, "about the here and now! He assures the people with whom He had grown up that the golden age has actually arrived."⁵⁸ Hendriksen wrote further that it is as if Jesus said, "'Today,' says He, 'while you are listening to me, the passage I read to you has been and is being realized.'"⁵⁹ It's clear from Matthew and Mark's placement in their gospels of the account of Christ's visit to Nazareth that prior to the visit, "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them."⁶⁰ Hendriksen was correct therefore to imply that the "today" that Jesus spoke of encompassed more than that particular day in Nazareth. It was already "being realized."

Jesus Christ, the self-proclaimed Son of Man, essentially identified Himself in that synagogue as the Servant of Lord in the Isaiah passage who indeed had been anointed by the Holy Spirit. As

⁵⁵ Isaiah 49.8,9

⁵⁶ The Greek word used here can also be translated as 'minister'

⁵⁷ Luke 4.20, 21

⁵⁸ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, Baker Book House, 1996, p. 255

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Luke 7.22

noted earlier, that occurred when He was baptized at the onset of His public ministry. John the Baptist testified regarding this anointing when he said, "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure."⁶¹ He would be the anointed One who would usher in the "acceptable year of the Lord" which was typified in the "Year of Jubilee" when Israel was commanded to "consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land."⁶² It was this anointing that profoundly qualified Him as the One Moses prophesied of when he said to the people, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear."⁶³ And so Jesus rightly claimed about Himself that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me."

The "Today" that Jesus spoke of continues even now. "Suppose," Hugh Martin wrote, Jesus "ceasing to use His own voice, He gives the book unto the minister and sits down; leaving your pastor to minister the word, himself continuing to minister to you the spirit (continuing, that is, to give you the word and spirit still) while He Himself, hidden from your view and now silent, still sits in your assembly: - Have you not the Lord's presence still?"⁶⁴ The on-going nature of the "Today" Jesus proclaimed found its realization firstly in the commissioning of His disciples to preach the gospel, baptize and make disciples. Jesus must have had Daniel's vision of the Son of Man being given "Dominion and glory and a kingdom" when He said at the time of the giving of the great commission, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."⁶⁵ These men secondly, were empowered at Pentecost when "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶ This pouring out of the Spirit in measure mirrored the pouring out of the Spirit at Christ's baptism. The disciples and ultimately the church would continue proclaiming the very message Jesus taught in the synagogue at Nazareth. And then came the preaching of Peter when three thousand "poor... brokenhearted... captive... oppressed" sinners were added to the church that day. And to be added to the church was to be ushered into Christ's kingdom and experience the beginnings of the promised rest for God's people.

In His proclaiming the present realized prophecy of Isaiah on that particular Sabbath in Nazareth, Jesus, the Son of Man, demonstrated His Lordship of not only that Sabbath, but of every subsequent Sabbath, which will culminate in that climactic Sabbath rest to come for God's people. He would be the consummate herald of God's intention to recover that Sabbath rest forfeited by Adam in his disobedience. And He would also be the One to accomplish that work of redemption necessary in order to secure that Sabbath rest. What better day to make this pronouncement of "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" than the Sabbath!

⁶¹ John 3.34

⁶² Leviticus 25.10

⁶³ Deuteronomy 18.15

⁶⁴ Hugh Martin, *The Abiding Presence*, Christian Focus Publications, 2009, p. 106

⁶⁵ Daniel 7.14; Matthew 28.18

⁶⁶ Acts 2.4

3. Miracles of Healing

In examining Christ's miracles of healing on the Sabbath, its helpful first to examine the opposition Jesus encountered from the Pharisees in general regarding the Sabbath. The oppressive comprehensive legalism imposed by them was laid bare on a particular Sabbath when the disciples were plucking grain to eat while they passed through a grainfield. The Pharisees coldly said to Jesus, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"⁶⁷ They had no regard for the fact that the disciples were hungry and in need of sustenance. They had taken the fourth commandment and turned it into a controlling legalistic burden which they laid on the people.

In referring to the Pharisees on that occasion, John MacArthur noted that, "This is what the Talmud said; If you roll wheat in your hands to remove the husks, it is sifting and that is forbidden. If you rub the heads of wheat, it is threshing and it is forbidden. If you clean off the shell, it is sifting and that is forbidden. If you throw the chaff into the air, that is winnowing, it is forbidden... So just in picking and rolling and rubbing and discarding, they had been reaping, threshing, sifting, grinding, winnowing and preparing food. And their real question, the real underlying question is...why do You and Your disciples live in such overt, open defiance of our religion? Why do You challenge our religion? Why do You challenge our authority?"⁶⁸

Jesus reminded them of the time David and his men were "in need and hungry... how he went into the house of God ... and ate the showbread..." Jesus went on to sanction this act by announcing that, "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath... the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."⁶⁹ He would be the One to define the intent and proper use of the Sabbath. The Pharisees had missed entirely the spirit of the commandment which was to promote good and to be life-giving. MacArthur further commented that, "when Jesus called Himself 'Lord of the Sabbath', He struck the severest blow at the Pharisaic system because the Pharisaic system, the system of works, merit, self-righteousness, achievement, attainment, of spiritual relationship with God through ceremony and ritual, and external law-keeping found its focal point in the Sabbath."⁷⁰ Jesus summed up their mis-use of the law when He said that the scribes and Pharisees "bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders..."⁷¹

Per the above, it was no accident or coincidence therefore, that Jesus often performed His miracles of healing on the Sabbath. Peter's mother-in-law, the man with the withered hand, the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, the woman with the spirit of infirmity, and the man with dropsy were all healed on the Sabbath.⁷² Similar to the account of the disciples in the grainfield, the Pharisees and religious rulers were indignant on the occasions of these healings.

⁶⁷ Mark 2.24

⁶⁸ John MacArthur sermon, *Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath*, Part 1, <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/41-11/jesus-is-lord-of-the-sabbath-part-1>

⁶⁹ Mark 2.27-28

⁷⁰ Ibid, MacArthur

⁷¹ Matthew 23.4

⁷² Mark 1.29-31; 3.1-6; Luke 13.10-17; 14.1-6

When the woman with the spirit of infirmity was healed, one of them rebuked Jesus and the others by declaring that, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."⁷³

The need for physical healing came about as a result of the fall. In the garden God had promised life to Adam if he was obedient in not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This life included eternal physical well-being. The tree of life was also placed there in the garden as a sacramental reminder to him of that promise. But when he disobeyed God by eating from the tree, God's promised result ensued which was death, both spiritual and physical. His knowledge of God and his love of God became radically corrupted such that his mind, now carnal, was at "enmity against God; for it (was) not subject to the law of God; nor indeed (could) be."⁷⁴ Further, God told him that "in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return", and indeed it came to pass that "the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died."⁷⁵ Physical death entered creation with all of its attendant preceding physical illnesses, diseases, deformities, infirmities, et al.

In John's vision of the new creation we read, "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him."⁷⁶ This vision presents a restored eschatological Eden, in fact a greater Eden where all of the effects of the fall will be gone, including the curse of physical death. What more appropriate Day, therefore, for Jesus to perform these marvelous miracles of healing than on the Sabbath. Presently the believer in this life does, "not have complete, consummate communion with (God) because of their continuation in the exile of the fallen world and their own fallen bodies. This exile prevents full enjoyment of God's presence because of persecution, the believer's own ongoing imperfections, and their own sinful bodies..." These impediments to "intimacy with God will be removed in the new heaven and earth... (and) the essence of this restoration for the saints is that their bodies and souls have been removed from the old world through resurrection and placed in a new-creational environment."⁷⁷

Certainly, it can be asserted that Christ's multiple healings on the Sabbath were a kind of preview, or "inaugurated effect"⁷⁸ of what will characterize that ultimate Sabbath rest to come for God's people. The true believer can now confidently join David who wrote, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is in me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not

⁷³ Luke 13:14

⁷⁴ Romans 8:7

⁷⁵ Genesis 3:19; 5:5

⁷⁶ Revelation 22:1-3

⁷⁷ Beale, pp. 554-555

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 555

all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, *Who heals all your diseases...*⁷⁹ And are not all of those physical infirmities and diseases healed by Jesus pictures of the spiritual corruptions that are healed by virtue of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ?

4. *The Synagogue at Capernaum*

A very startling account is given to us in both Mark and Luke's gospels of Christ's encounter on the Sabbath with a man with an unclean spirit. It's startling because this man was in the synagogue of all places. And yet we're not entirely caught by surprise. The Apostle John wrote that, "The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."⁸⁰ And that included this synagogue. Hendriksen wrote, "The devil never misses a service."⁸¹ Religious gatherings and teachings had degenerated to where the presence of a man with an unclean spirit was apparently tolerated, or perhaps not even noticed. This spiritual deterioration seems clear from the fact that when Jesus taught there in the synagogue, "they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."⁸² The scribes read and taught the law of Moses, but it was apparently not accompanied by the power of God. Jesus said to unbelieving Jews, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."⁸³ They were seeking righteousness, but "they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at the stumbling stone"⁸⁴, and that stone was Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, "if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them."⁸⁵ This works-righteousness could be termed the gospel according to Satan, and the man with the unclean spirit therefore was comfortable in that synagogue.

Its interesting to note what it was that caused the man to cry out. It was the teaching of Jesus which the congregation recognized as teaching accompanied with true authority and power. This the demoniac could not withstand. Like Satan in the wilderness with Jesus, he had no counter response to the word of God from the lips of the Son of Man, God Himself in the flesh. Jesus "came to His own, and His own did not receive Him"⁸⁶, and yet ironically the demon immediately recognized who was speaking and called out, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are – the holy One of God!"⁸⁷

⁷⁹ Psalm 103.1-3, *italics mine*

⁸⁰ 1 John 5.19

⁸¹ Hendriksen, p. 266

⁸² Mark 1.22

⁸³ John 5.39-40

⁸⁴ Romans 9.32

⁸⁵ 2 Corinthians 4.3-4

⁸⁶ John 1.11

⁸⁷ Mark 1.24

Mark carefully placed this account prominently in the very first chapter of his gospel record as if to demonstrate the deep level of infiltration of Satan into the world. Here was one of his demons in the church itself! Adam failed as guardian in his not driving out Satan, and Israel, the corporate Adam⁸⁸, failed to expel Satan as well. It was fitting therefore that Jesus, the Son of Man, having demonstrated that He is the greater Adam in his victory over Satan in the wilderness, continued next as the greater Israel, or corporate Adam, with His expulsion and defeat of Satan at the point of his deepest penetration, God's people Israel. In commenting on the Jews in Smyrna cited in Revelation 2.9, Beale has written, "the Jews were not only 'false Jews' but also 'a synagogue of Satan...'"⁸⁹, and so too, apparently, it was the case with this synagogue at Capernaum. How appropriate, therefore, it was that Christ as Lord of the Sabbath expelled this demon on the Sabbath, which showed His ultimate intention of recovering the "rest" that Adam and Israel gave up through their rebellious disobedience. The Sabbath rest that awaits God's people will be free of any vestige of influence, presence or control of Satan and his demons.

Jesus responded to the demon's outburst by rebuking him with, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And being in complete submission, the demon obeyed. Here the Son of Man authoritatively demonstrated that He is indeed Lord of the Sabbath. During the week leading up to His death on the cross, Jesus proclaimed, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."⁹⁰ He then essentially pointed to the means by which the ruler of this world would be cast down by immediately stating that, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."⁹¹ It would be at the cross where He would deliver the decisive blow to Satan. There Christ's heel would be "struck" in His sufferings and death, but it would also be the place where the head of the serpent would be "crushed."⁹²

Conclusion:

As has been noted earlier in this paper, Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of Man. In his commentary on the book of Revelation, Derek Thomas wrote that many think that Jesus was only referring to His human nature, "His solidarity with our human existence, His incarnation." But he went on to observe that when Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?", Peter responded with, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God"⁹³, which "did not draw attention to His humanity so much as His deity!"⁹⁴ Jesus Himself would answer

⁸⁸ Beale, multiple citations, for example: p. 93, "Israel was designed to be corporate Adam, emerging out of the plague chaos of Egypt and in a beginning new creation of the exodus, taking residence again in another garden of Eden (the promised land) and obeying the mandate that the first Adam should have obeyed and finally achieving complete eternal rest in a glorified new creation"

⁸⁹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation, A Commentary on the Greek Text*, W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999, p. 241

⁹⁰ John 12.31

⁹¹ Ibid, v. 32

⁹² Genesis 3.15, NIV translation

⁹³ Matthew 16.13,16

⁹⁴ Derek Thomas, *Let's Study Revelation*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003, pp. 12-13

that same question regarding His self-designation of Son of Man by declaring that “the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”⁹⁵ As such, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the Son of Man, directly connected His purpose in coming to the Sabbath. Geerhardus Vos called the Sabbath “the expression of the eschatological principle on which the life of humanity has been constructed... It teaches its lesson through the rhythmical succession of six days of labour and one ensuing day of rest in each successive week. Man is reminded in this way that life is not an aimless existence, that a goal lies beyond.”⁹⁶

For Jesus to appropriate the title Lord of the Sabbath therefore was in a sense a way of describing the end goal of His entire work of redemption and His prominent role in it. As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ would be the One to usher it in. Each Sabbath we celebrate, therefore, is a kind of rehearsal, a preview of and “a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest”⁹⁷ Further, Christ’s self identification as the Son of Man was to describe the very means by which He would accomplish this great work of the establishment of this eschatological rest for God’s people. As Vos wrote, “The work which issues into rest can now no longer be man’s own work. It becomes the work of Christ.” And that work was such that in order for this rest to be procured, it was necessary for God to make “Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”⁹⁸ God’s justice must be satisfied such that “He... might be the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”⁹⁹

Therefore, Jesus, in His victory over Satan in the wilderness, His healings and casting out of demons, provided a glorious foretaste of the rest to come for the elect which will be entirely free of all of the repercussions of the fall, including not only the guilt and the power of sin, but evil, Satan, disease and death. It’s in that preview of the Son of Man’s Lordship of the Sabbath that the true believer can have full confidence that the fullness of the eschatological Sabbath rest to come will indeed be ushered in by the very same Lord of the Sabbath upon His glorious return. We read that “He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold I make all things new.’”¹⁰⁰ And can’t we also say even now, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies... the Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.”¹⁰¹ “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Mark 2.28

⁹⁶ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991, p. 140

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 141

⁹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5.21

⁹⁹ Romans 3.26

¹⁰⁰ Revelation 21.5

¹⁰¹ Psalm 103.2-3,19

¹⁰² Revelation 22.20