

UP-SIDE-DOWN THINKING

The Pharisees have their thinking up-side-down concerning “man” and “the Sabbath.” They have the Sabbath as something that would dictate to man, have dominion over man, and thus, rule over him. They have the Sabbath *up here* and man *down there* subservient to this religious observance. Jesus’ purpose is to correct the Pharisees’ thinking on the relationship of man and the Sabbath.

Their thinking: the Sabbath man Jesus’ teaching: man the Sabbath

What’s happening here is these Pharisees have got “the servant above the master” (*Math 10:24*). And the answer that Jesus gives puts the servant, the Sabbath, in its place, and exalts the master, man, to dominance. To correct their thinking, he’s simply gonna flip this whole thing over. “Man” is **down** in their thinking. What will bring him **up**? Would it be by saying, “The Sabbath was made for *all mankind*”? No. That doesn’t have anything to do with Jesus’ purpose here. “Man” is not the least bit exalted by the thought of “*all mankind*.” That’s not what Jesus said. He said: The Sabbath was made “**FOR** [to serve] **MAN**.” That’s the idea. The **SDA**’s “*all mankind*” will never flip this situation over. But by saying: The Sabbath was made “**FOR MAN**”—man is now “over” the Sabbath.

THE SDA MISS THE ILLUSTRATION

Christ answers them with a two-fold answer—“And he said unto them” (v25), “And he said unto them” (v27). The first is an **illustration** of David and the shewbread to *show them* what he is about to *say to them* in verse 27. The **illustration** has nothing to do with “all mankind,” but it has everything to do with “made for man.” Notice that Christ’s illustration is perfectly in line with their question—“not lawful” (v24), “not lawful” (v26). And his answer (v27) perfectly corresponds with his illustration (vv25,26). It’s all tightly interwoven.

David and his men represent “man.” The shewbread represents “the Sabbath.” This is what Christ is teaching by the illustration—“**The shewbread was made for man, and not man for the shewbread.**” Jesus is setting these Pharisees up to *hear* what he is about to say to them by drawing them a vivid *picture*. The shewbread “made for man” is crucial to understanding what Jesus means when he says the Sabbath was “made for man.” The shewbread unlocks the mystery. It’s the piece of the puzzle that solves the whole thing. To take only Jesus’ words of verse 27, as Adventists do, without the shewbread illustration is just to grope around in the dark. You could end up anywhere, with any kind of interpretation. The shewbread is that which Jesus uses to shed light on the whole passage. Leave it off and you’re just fumbling around.

Jesus is a master illustrator, giving a brilliant illustration. It fits perfectly. No better picture could have been drawn. *On purpose*, he gives this illustration **first**. Why? To guide us rightly in interpreting his answer that follows. Adventists clearly *miss* all of this, and thus, *miss-interpret* the phrase—“the Sabbath was made for man” in verse 27. It’s a classic example of a text being lifted out of its context—a context which clearly opposes their interpretation. The **SHEWBREAD** was not “made *for mankind*.” It was for the **Jewish priests only**. But the shewbread was “made *for man*.” The **SABBATH** was not

“made *for mankind*.” It was for the **Jewish people only**. But the Sabbath was “made *for man*.” Why would you only hear *half* of what Jesus said? His answer begins with verse 25, not verse 27. What an opportunity we have to be sure that we don’t go off in the wrong direction! Jesus is carefully guiding us, by verses 25 & 26, into that which he is about to tell us in verse 27. The illustration is a safeguard to keep us on the right path. Those who skip the illustration and ignore the picture should not be surprised when they fall into error.

THE STOCK THEY PLACE IN THIS TEXT

How important is Mark 2:27 to the **SDA**’s Sabbath doctrine? In *Questions on Doctrine* (2003ed.), they open their Sabbath chapter (p129) stating: The Sabbath “in Eden” was “given to mankind”; God “set it apart **for man**.” Then they list this reference, Mark 2:27, to correspond with “**for man**.” So they show us that **this text** is their “key passage” they base their doctrine on that the Sabbath was given “to mankind,” using these two words of Jesus—“**for man**.” Then on page 134 it becomes obvious that **this text** is the “foundation” upon which the **SDA** Church stands to teach that the Sabbath was given to all men. Under #1, they state: “Adventists believe that the seventh-day Sabbath—which was ‘made for man’ (Mark 2:27)—was given to ‘man’ (i.e. mankind) in Eden...” They list no other text in the entire paragraph to support this **SDA** doctrine. No other text! In other words, all their talk that the seventh-day Sabbath is not “the Jewish” Sabbath, that “in Eden” it was given “to mankind” and that “all men” are obligated to keep it—it is **this text** they base all this on!

Listen to them further in their **SDA** Believe book: (2006ed.) “Christ could have disposed of the Sabbath if he wanted to, but he did not. On the contrary he applied it to all human beings, saying, ‘The Sabbath was made for man’ (Mark 2:27)” (p286). They list no other text. So what they’re clearly showing us is that when they teach that “all human beings” are under the Sabbath command, **this text** is their #1 key text! This is important for us to see—just how much “stock” they place in **this text**. My point is that if **this text** fails, and it’s demonstrated that they’ve completely missed **this text**, then the “foundation” upon which their whole Sabbath doctrine rests has just collapsed! They’ve got that much riding on **this text**!

Notice something else here. These three listings are the *only* place in their Statements of Faith where Mark 2:27 is mentioned. This is it. Nowhere else. That’s a fact. And this fact exposes another fact—that they’re not at all interested **in the context**! You can see that from what I’ve just showed you. They say *nothing* about the verses leading up to **this text**. What was going on? What did Jesus say previously? They don’t talk about it. They ignore the setting (v23), the question (v24), and the previous illustration (vv25,26). Keep this fact in mind as you read on. Nothing else could be more revealing.

A COMPLETE “JEWISH” SETTING

This is completely a “*Jewish*” setting. The Pharisees are *Jewish*. Their question concerns these disciples who are *Jewish*, and their actions on a *Jewish* Sabbath day. Jesus, a *Jew*, answers them with an illustration about David, a *Jew*, going into the *Jewish* Tabernacle and eating *Jewish* shewbread that was to be eaten only by *Jewish* priests. Nowhere in this entire context—

neither the setting, the question, or Jesus’ answer—does anything have to do with “**all mankind**.” Absolutely nothing. It’s entirely “*Jewish*.” A Jew is speaking to Jews about Jews and Jewish laws! The only way that “**all mankind**” can possibly get in here is for you to lift it completely out of this “*Jewish*” setting. That’s exactly what the **SDA** do! The only three places in their Statements of Faith where they give you this phrase in verse 27—that’s all you get! Just this phrase. No context! Get it *away* from the disciples’ actions, *away* from the Pharisees’ question, and *away* from Christ’s previous illustration, and you can do what you want with it. They do!

THE SHEWBREAD & THE SABBATH

The Pharisees don’t get their question answered. Instead they get hit with a vivid illustration that shows them the true nature of the Sabbath and its true place. And what does Jesus use? **Bread!** Made by man! Baked by man! And eaten by man! That which serves man in every way. If ever there was something that was “made for man”—this is it—**bread!** Now you see where Jesus got his phrase in verse 27, “made for man”—from the shewbread. As the shewbread was “*made for man*,” even so, the Sabbath was “*made for man*.” Just like the shewbread was made, baked and eaten, it was there to serve man, “made for man”—not “made for *all mankind*,” it was only for the Jewish priests, but it was “made for man,” that is, to serve man, to benefit man, for man’s use.

As the shewbread pertained only to the **Jewish priests**, even so the Sabbath pertained only to the **Jewish people**. Yet the word “**man**” can be used in both instances, with neither one pertaining to *all mankind*, but merely to “man” as “man.” Christ is linking the Sabbath side by side with the shewbread, and he shows that both of them were “made for man.” It makes no sense to throw “*all mankind*” into this context. It doesn’t fit with the Sabbath any more than it fits with the shewbread. Jesus has yoked these two things together in such a way that what applies to one applies to the other. If one is “made,” the other is “made.” If one is “made for man,” the other is “made for man.” The reason why the **SDA** ignore the context is because they know that if they apply “all mankind” to the Sabbath, they have to apply it to the shewbread! Jesus has bound these two things together. And if they say, “The Sabbath was made for *all mankind*,” they equally have to say, “The shewbread was made for *all mankind*.” You can’t have one without the other. What’s true of the Sabbath, in this context, is true of the shewbread. If the Sabbath is universal, the shewbread is universal. If one pertains to all mankind, so does the other.

A CEREMONIAL LAW

What kind of “lawful” does Jesus respond with (v26)? The same kind they posed in their question, a *ceremonial* “lawful” (v24). In their thinking, man serves the Sabbath. So Christ uses David and the *ceremonial* law of the shewbread to illustrate what he’s about to say to them on the true place of the Sabbath. The shewbread was not superior to David, above David, higher than David—Why? He was “**man!**” The shewbread is nothing but bread—“made **for man**.” The need of David and his men superseded that *ceremonial law*. The *ceremonial law* of the shewbread was in no way superior to,

or above “man” and his needs. Suppose the priests objected. David, as Christ did here, could have said, “**The shewbread was made for man, and not man for the shewbread.**”

By David saying, “The shewbread was made for man,” he speaks of man as “man,” not “all mankind.” His thinking has nothing to do with either *some* men or *all* men—but **man!**

man bread the needs of man a ceremonial law

When Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man,” he speaks of man as “man,” not “all mankind.” His thinking has nothing to do with either *some* men or *all* men—but **man!**

man Sabbath the needs of man a ceremonial law

The way the **SDA** emphasize and advertise Mark 2:27 is to cause you to think about this: “mankind” vs. “the Jews.” That’s what they want you to see. As if the Pharisees had asked, “To whom did God give the Sabbath?” Their question had *nothing* to do with that! Regardless, they want you to see Jesus responding to: “**Who is the Sabbath for?**” *the Jews* or *all mankind*. They want you to draw this contrast in your mind, and see Jesus settling the issue once and for all. But if that’s what’s happening, the same contrast applies to the illustration: “**Who is the shewbread for?**” *the Jewish priests* or *all mankind* (which included David and his men). But how ridiculous would it have been for David to say, “The shewbread was made for *all mankind*,” or for a priest to say, “No, the shewbread was made for *the priests*.” That’s not the issue at all! That kind of thinking is foreign to the whole setting!

The issue is not **THE PRECISE PEOPLE** involved in this ceremonial law of the shewbread. It’s not *mankind* on the one side and *the priests* on the other; it’s the needs of “**man**” on the one side and a ceremonial law concerning “**bread**” on the other. And so with Jesus, the issue is not **THE PRECISE PEOPLE** involved in the ceremonial law of the Sabbath. It’s not *mankind* on the one side and *the Jews* on the other.—That’s just what the **SDA** wants you to think about!—It’s the needs of “**man**” on the one side and a ceremonial law concerning “**the Sabbath**” on the other. Jesus is not dealing with “man” in the numerical sense. His concern with man is not how many, rather *who he is*. Christ is aiming at *the dignity* of man. The Pharisees had the Sabbath reigning over man. Jesus turns it all around.

A SIMPLE-MINDED PRIEST & THE SDA

When David said, “The shewbread was made for man,” how brainless for some priest to focus on the word “**man**” and build an argument based solely on that word, and miss what David was saying. David wasn’t talking about mankind, every human being. He was talking about man as man, superior to bread, superior to a ceremonial law. This same fellow might have said, “No, David, you’re wrong, the shewbread was made for us, *the Jewish priests only*, not man.” David would’ve looked with pity upon such a simple-minded soul. The poor guy missed the whole point! And so does the **SDA** Church! Just like this simpleton, they focus on the word “**man**,” misinterpret it, and say Christ is talking about all mankind, you, me & everybody! Same setting, same situation, same scenario!—a simple-minded priest and the **SDA** Church!

This is not just their view; it's an **SDA** stronghold! It's their favorite text for their big universal Sabbath doctrine! And they've missed Christ's whole point entirely! He's not talking about mankind, every human being. He's talking about "man" as "man," superior to the ceremonial law concerning shewbread, and superior to the ceremonial law concerning the Sabbath.

WHY DIDN'T JESUS JUST SAY "ALL MEN"?

The **SDA's** method of interpretation automatically turns the word "man" into "**all men**," when *this* or *that* man isn't being designated, without any explanation at all. Why didn't Jesus just say "**all men**"? He did in Luke 6:26, "Woe unto you when **all men** shall speak well of you!" and Luke 13:4, "Think ye that they were sinners above **all men** that dwelt in Jerusalem?" Why didn't Christ just say, "The Sabbath was made for **all men**"? If that's his point, and that's what he wants us to understand, why not just say it? "The Sabbath was made for **all men**." Because that's not his point at all! "All men" has nothing to do with either the setting (*v23*), the question (*v24*), or the illustration (*vv25, 26*). "All men" and "all mankind" is something totally foreign to this passage and must be forced upon it. Adventists lift this one phrase out of verse 27, *away* from the disciples and the cornfields, *away* from the Pharisees question that prompted it, and *away* from the illustration Jesus gives—they tear it completely out of the Bible and dangle it before your eyes, saying, "Look at what Jesus says." But the truth is, what Jesus says begins with verse 25 about David and the shewbread which ties everything together, and fully explains the meaning of "made for man" in verse 27.

THE SDA & THREE EXAMPLES OF "MAN"

Why don't they tell us why they interpret "man" here universally to refer to "all mankind"? The following three passages are good examples that demonstrate for us just how crucial the context is to rightly interpreting the word man.

ROMANS 9:20—"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" What of the **SDA's** *automatic* interpretation of the word "man"? It doesn't hold up. Paul's "man" here cannot refer to "all mankind" and "all human beings." Why? It doesn't fit the context. "Man" here is restricted by the phrase, "thou that repliest against God." That's who this "man" is—only those who reply against the sovereignty of God (*see vv 18 & 19*).

1 CORINTHIANS 15:21—"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." According to the **SDA**, Paul is saying, "For since by all human beings came death, by all human beings came also the resurrection of the dead." Sound a little ridiculous? Of course! The Scriptures are not to be interpreted in such an *arbitrary* fashion. The context clearly gives us the proper interpretation. Paul is speaking not of "all mankind," but "Adam" and "Christ" (*see vv 20 & 22*). He's saying, "For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Christ] came also the resurrection of the dead."

2 PETER 1:21—"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." According to the **SDA**, Peter is saying that the prophecy came not in old time by the will of

"all human beings." But that cannot be. Peter's "man" here is limited by the context. It's tied directly to the "holy men of God" who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "By the will of man" refers to them, and them alone. You see then by these three examples how *improper* and *unscriptural* it is for the **SDA** to arbitrarily interpret the word "man" in Mark 2:27 to mean "all mankind." They have no right to do so. They have clearly *colored* this vital passage with an **SDA** bias.

"THE TREES WERE MADE FOR MAN"

Consider the Pharisees position again and how they had man here "for the Sabbath," instead of the Sabbath here "for man." Think of the trees. Is man here "for the trees"? or, Are the trees here "for man"? Is man here to serve the trees? or, Are the trees here to serve man? Naturally, they're here "for man," for man's benefit, to serve man—for beauty, shade, food, wood, etc. But the Pharisees in their *lopsided* Sabbath thinking would have man here "for the trees," to serve the trees; for they had man here, Jesus says, "for the Sabbath" (*v27*).

Think about it. Say the disciples are cutting down some trees on Wednesday to build a boat, and a different set of Pharisees pass by, and these guys are hung up on trees. To this clan, a tree is a "sacred" thing. And so, sure enough, out comes the objection: "What are your disciples doing cutting down those glorious trees?" This set of Pharisees has "man" here "for the trees," instead of the trees here "for man." In their minds, the trees are above man and his needs. So when Jesus says, "**The trees were made FOR MAN, and not man FOR THE TREES**," he's not talking about how many men—all men or some men—that wouldn't help their messed-up thinking at all. They need to hear about the *nobility* and the *dignity* of man—*who he is*. **Man** stands taller than the tallest tree! He's made in the very image of God! The rest of creation is *to serve him*! That's the meaning of "made for man." The trees were made "**FOR [to serve] MAN**." When the word "man" is changed into a **number**, all mankind, the meaning is lost. The purpose for the answer is gone.

YOU CANNOT HAVE BOTH!

What Adventists do when they make Jesus emphasize a number in the word "man"—how many: "all mankind," "all human beings"—they rob the passage of its true meaning. The **dignity of man** is lost; **who man is** is gone. You cannot have both of these meanings—how many will not fit in with who man is. If you have one, you cannot have the other. It's either this one or that one. Either: (1) The Sabbath was made for all mankind, or (2) The Sabbath was made *for man*. The first one speaks of how many men; the second one speaks of who man is. If you choose (1) you cannot have (2). When you say, "The Sabbath was made for all mankind," that has nothing to do with who man is; and the thought of who man is in his dignity is lost. But that's where the emphasis is in Jesus' meaning—"The Sabbath was made for man"—for man's benefit, to serve man. Why? because he's "**man**!"

Now things are right-side-up for the Pharisees. Man is up and the Sabbath is down. "All mankind" and "all human beings" could never do that. The **SDA's** "how many" could never help the Pharisees. They're not confused at all about who the Sabbath was given to. That's not what they're asking

in verse 24, nor is that where their Sabbath error springs from. They're confused about whether the Sabbath is *over* man, or man is *over* the Sabbath. To put a "number" in Jesus' answer is to miss the whole point—whether that number be "all mankind" or just "the Jews"—it has nothing at all to do with this passage.

Jesus is not dealing with, *to whom does the Sabbath apply?* He's simply talking about the Sabbath's *position* with reference "to man." "All mankind" has no place or purpose in his thinking. He's speaking of man as **man**—not which one, not who, or how many—just **man**. The Sabbath doesn't dominate over "man." The Sabbath was made "for" man, and not man "for" the Sabbath. His purpose is to keep the Sabbath in its place by setting forth **the dignity of man**. To set this passage up to where the focal point is "mankind" vs. "the Jews" defeats Jesus' purpose entirely.

A QUIET TIME TO REFLECT & RESOLVE

Could it be that you've always looked at these words of Jesus through a set of spectacles not your own, following for years the "**cherished opinions**" of the **SDA**? And could it be that at present you find yourself a bit uneasy about this text and the beliefs you've always held, even to the point of conviction? Has the truth of Scripture laid hold upon you to such a degree that compromise is out of the question, and that which has always been has been overthrown by that which is before you now? Light has a sobering impact upon those who truly love "the Light of this world." It brings us to a crossroads where we see him on one side and all else on the other, and nothing is of any value except the honor and glory he receives from our allegiance. Has what you've always held on to with such a tenacious grip and stood for so valiantly been nothing more than the "**cherished opinions**" of others that you've so devotedly made your very own? If so, your duty is to follow the conviction you feel even now and resolve once and for all to be free from the shackles of church doctrine and stand upon the Scriptures alone. Such a resolution will elevate you to a higher plane than you've ever known before to where the faith and opinions of your church will by no means ever sway your conscience again or dictate your journey in search of the truth. Perhaps you're hesitant, though, to make such a bold move as to shift from what you've always been taught to the light you now see shining so brightly upon **Jesus' words in Mark 2:27**. At this juncture, then, Ellen G. White has some good counsel for you. It concerns truth, cherished opinions, and accepting the light that is given:

If you search the Scriptures to vindicate your own opinions, you will never reach the truth. Search in order to learn what the Lord says. If conviction comes as you search, if you see that your **cherished opinions** are not in harmony with the truth, do not misinterpret the truth in order to suit your own belief, **but accept the light given.**

SDA Believe, "To The Readers"

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"THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN"

"And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" —Mark 2:27

The Seventh-day Adventists (**SDA**) are in *short supply* when it comes to providing "Sabbath" proof-texts *from the New Testament*. They know that neither Christ nor the apostles ever commanded Sabbath observance. The passage above in Mark, though, is one of their favorites. They use it with vigor and enthusiasm to try and convince people that "the Sabbath was made for all mankind." But a careful reading of the text will reveal that this is not at all what our Lord is teaching in Mark 2:27. Our first point, however, will be to show that the Bible is very clear as to whom the Sabbath *was* given.

THE SABBATH WAS GIVEN TO THE JEWS

There are various Scriptures that testify plainly that "the Sabbath" was *not* "given to mankind," as **SDA** teach, but to the Jews alone: "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt...therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath" (*Deut 5:15*). "Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai...and **madest known unto them** thy holy Sabbath" (*Neh 9:13,14*). This implies that it was not known before, that is, *from creation*. In harmony with this, God said: "I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness...Moreover also I **gave them** my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them" (*Ezek 20:10,12*). When did God give them the Sabbath? when he *brought them out of Egypt*. Where did he give it to them? *in the wilderness*. What for? for a *sign* between himself and them. It does not say that God *restated*, *restored*, or *reaffirmed* the Sabbath, but that he gave them the Sabbath. "I *gave them* my Sabbaths" implies the act of committing it to them, showing that they did not have it before, that this was a new thing to them, and only for them—"The Lord hath given you the Sabbath" (*Exod 16:29*). If God *made it known* unto them, and *gave it* to them, was it not *their* Sabbath?—the "*Jewish*" Sabbath.

MARK 2:23-28

(1) **THE SETTING**—Disciples plucking corn on the Sabbath
(2) **THE QUESTION**—"Why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?"

(3) **THE ANSWER**—"Have ye never read what David did, when he had need...How he went into the house of God...and did eat the shewbread which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath..."

The Sabbath was *given* to the Jews. It was "made"—"**for man**," for man's benefit. Man was not made *for the Sabbath*—to serve it. The Sabbath was not made to "lord" or *rule* over him. The Sabbath was made to serve man. In this setting, that day was made to serve these disciples; they were not made to serve that day.