

JOHN 5:18, JOHN 9:16

Did Yahshua the Messiah break the Sabbath?

By Bro. Voy Wilks

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that Yahweh was his Father, making himself equal with Yahweh” (John 5:18 KJV).

Yahshua the Messiah did not break the Sabbath. He observed the Sabbath and it is His custom too. Please read: Mathew 4:23, 9:35, 12:9-14, 13:53, Mark 1:21,39, 3:1-6, 6:2, Luke 4:15,16,31, 6:6-11,13:10-17, John 6:58, 9:14, 18:20 It is only reasonable to believe the Bible message is harmonious throughout the Scriptures, creating no contradictions. Even when writing fiction, it is a poor author who allows inconsistencies to creep into the story. When writing historical fact, this is unlikely to happen. Relative to Yahshua’s breaking the Sabbath; there are at least two possibilities which we should consider.

The Apostle John may have written this message as it appears in most of our English Bibles. If so, he intended us to understand that only in the eyes of the Jewish people did the Messiah break the Sabbath. The following is also a likely explanation.

A few words may have been added or deleted, causing a reverse reading of the text. This could have happened accidentally as the scribes copied from the older manuscripts. There is also the possibility this was done purposely, by later Gentile scribes. In either case, the result would be the same, of course.

In the Scriptures there are a few places in which words have been added, thus creating an opposite meaning from that in the original? Examples of this are found in Acts 15:24 (where nine words were added), and Acts 21:25 (where eight words were added), giving an **opposite** meaning from that originally intended. Also, 24 words were added to 1 John 5:7, 8. How is it known these words were added?

The King James translators did very well indeed. However, they were handicapped because the oldest manuscript available to them dated only to the tenth century C.E.* Since then many manuscripts have been found which date much earlier; to C.E. 325 or 350–600 years earlier than those used by the King’s Men. These older manuscripts **do not** contain the above mentioned additions. This means they crept in **after** C.E. 350, but before the King’s Men made their translation in 1611. After consulting the older manuscripts, most recent translators have not retained the added words named above.

It is certain that the Messiah did not really break Yahweh’s Sabbath law, but at most only the traditions of the elders – traditions added to the law of Yahweh. Sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Yahshua the Messiah was **without sin** (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22). He was perfect (Lk. 6:40; Heb. 2:10; 5:9). Indeed, if he transgressed in any way, he could not have been our Redeemer – our Savior – a sacrifice on our behalf (Heb. 9:28). It was necessary that he should be totally sinless.

He challenged his enemies to point out sin in his life – any sin – if he was a transgressor of the law. Having no evidence, they called him a crazy Samaritan.

“Which one of you can rebuke me **because of sin**? If I speak the truth why do you not believe me? ... The Jews answered, saying unto him, Did we not say well, that you are a Samaritan, and that you are crazy?” (John 8:45-48 Lamsa).

“You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there **is no sin**” (1 John 3:5 RSV). Yahshua the Messiah is our Passover Lamb, and the Passover lamb was to be without blemish (1 Cor. 5:7; Ex. 12:5). Many Scriptures tell us the animals **offered for sin** were to be without blemish (Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1, 6; 4:3, 23, 28, 32). Yahshua is our sacrifice for sin, so he too must have been without blemish (1 Pet. 3:18).

All this indicates Yahshua did not break the Sabbath, but broke only the traditions of the elders.

And how many laws did tradition recognize in order to safe-guard the Sabbath day? One thousand five hundred twenty-one (1,521) laws for the Sabbath alone had been imposed by the elders upon the Jewish people. ** Perhaps this is why *The Living Bible* paraphrases John 5:18 in the following manner:

“Then the Jewish leaders were all the more eager to kill him because in addition to disobeying **their** Sabbath laws, he had spoken of Yahweh as his Father ...”

The *Holy Name Bible* gives an interesting translation of this verse. “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him because [they contended that] He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that Elohim was His Father ...” (bracketed words were added by the translator).

Bible commentators, even those who do not keep the Sabbath, give interesting insights into John 5:18; for example:

“They **supposed** that he had broken it” (Barnes Notes on the N.T., One Volume Edition; Kregel, Grand Rapids, MI; page 288).

“They had found out two pretences to take away his life: one was that he had broken the Sabbath ... **as they pretended** ...” (*Clark’s Commentary*, John 5:18).

“... The Jews were seeking to slay him, because not only **in their opinion, though very falsely**, he was violating ... the Sabbath. ... He was abrogating the petty restrictions and abolishing the **unscriptural** somnolence by which it had been characterized and **misunderstood**” (*Pulpit Commentary*, John 5:18).

It is helpful to remember the reason for this charge against Yahshua in John 5:18. He had healed a man on the Sabbath day (John 5:5-18).

On another occasion Yahshua’s disciples rubbed the grains of wheat in their hands and ate. The Pharisees found fault, so he replied, “But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the **guiltless**” (Mt. 12:7). The disciples broke the traditions of the elders, but were **not guilty** of breaking the law of Yahweh.

“Wherefore **it is lawful** to do well [by healing] on the sabbath days” (Mt. 12:10-12).

“... the **scriptures cannot be broken**; ...” (John 10:34, 35).

Scripture cannot be **broken**. The Greek word is **luo**; the same **broken** as in John 5:18. Since Scripture cannot (or should not) be broken, we can safely conclude that Yahshua the Messiah did not break the **Scriptural** law of the Sabbath – only the **traditions** of the elders which had been **added** to the Sabbath laws.

* Emphatic Diaglott, by Benjamin Wilson, page 6.

** From Sabbath to Sunday, by Samuele Bacchiocchi; The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, Rome; page 33.