



Sabbath—The Protocol for Service

It was Sabbath in Galilee. The year was A.D. 29. Jesus was visiting the synagogue in His hometown—Nazareth. Every Sabbath an elder would read something from the scriptures and exhort the people to still hope for the coming Messiah.¹ Since Jesus was visiting home, someone invited Him to read something from Isaiah.

He found chapter 61; and He read: “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”²

They knew the passage well. They recognized it was about the Messiah.³ Closing the scroll, Jesus gave it back to the attendant. Every eye fastened upon Him.⁴ Word of His mighty works and teachings in Judea arrived ahead of Him. Everyone was curious to hear what He would say. They wondered, what would He do?

They liked what He said!—for Luke says that everybody bore witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth.⁵

—The Desire of Ages

“Jesus stood before the people as a living expositor of the prophecies concerning Himself. Explaining the words He had read, He spoke of the Messiah as a reliever of the oppressed, a liberator of captives, a healer of the afflicted, restoring sight to the blind, and revealing to the world the light of truth. His impressive manner and the wonderful import of His words thrilled the hearers with a power they had never felt before. The tide of divine influence broke every barrier down; like Moses, they beheld the invisible. As their hearts were moved upon by the Holy Spirit, they responded with fervent amens and praises to the Lord.”⁶

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 236.

² Luke 4:18-19.

³ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 236.

⁴ Luke 4:20.

⁵ Luke 4:22.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 237.

But as soon as Jesus announced: “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,” they suddenly realized He was talking about them. Jesus represented them—Israelites, children of Abraham—as being in bondage. He said they were prisoners needing deliverance from evil; in darkness, without the light of truth. Their pride was offended. Their fears were aroused. “The words of Jesus indicated that His work for them was to be altogether different from what they desired.”⁷

The people of Nazareth understood the context of Isaiah 61. “Little Jesus” (that’s how the folks remembered Him); “Little Jesus” had stumbled into *already fulfilled* prophecy. These words were just a few verses away:

“And they shall build the old wastes, [Jerusalem] they shall rise up the former desolations, [the temple] and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.”⁸

Verse 6 says: “Ye shall be named the *Priests of the Lord*: men shall call you the *Ministers of our God*.” They were also acquainted with its sister passage, Isaiah 58:

“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.”⁹

The seer expounds the Sabbath in this regard:

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: —for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”¹⁰

This stuff already happened! They already rebuilt Jerusalem. The temple was already restored. They had a fully functional priesthood. The sacrificial system was a well-oiled machine.

There were strict guards around the Sabbath. They *had* turned their feet away from doing their own pleasure on that day. They couldn’t even take an afternoon walk. It was unlawful to spit on the ground or rub the ground with the foot, because that might plow¹¹—or the spit might mix with the dirt to make clay¹² or brick.

So what was Jesus talking about? Why did He say He was sent to proclaim liberty to the captives? What captives? Why did He think they needed the light of truth?

—House of Mercy

The Nazareth folks knew that Jesus was in trouble with the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. They knew He had just come from there. It started with a skirmish with the Pharisees at Bethesda. It was Sabbath that day too—a high Sabbath—it was *Passover Sabbath*. Passover was a big deal in Jerusalem.

Bethesda was a pool near the sheep market. Its name means *House of Mercy*.¹³ It had five porticoes with roof structures supported by columns or enclosed walls. Archeologists have uncovered this facility. It was really two pools surrounded with four porticoes—with a fifth

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Isaiah 61:4. Bracketed contents added.

⁹ Isaiah 58:12.

¹⁰ Isaiah 58:13-14.

¹¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Law of the Sabbath*, from *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Appendix XVII, 1886, (<http://mb-soft.com/believe/txo/lawsabba.htm>), accessed 3/24/2019.

¹² Daniel Giron, *What is the Significance of Jesus’ Spitting on the Ground in the Book of John?*, January 19, 2015, (<https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/36538/what-is-the-significance-of-jesus-spitting-on-the-ground-in-the-book-of-john>), accessed 3/24/2019.

¹³ Wikipedia, *Pool of Bethesda*, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pool_of_Bethesda), accessed 10-6-2018.

between them. Water filled the upper pool, piped from a spring. The upper pool fed the lower pool.¹⁴

John describes a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered,—laying in these porticoes, waiting around for the moving of the water.

Scholars think Bethesda was part of the Hellenization of really built according to the pattern of the Greco-Roman hundred of these healing temples existed in the First-Century were sacred to the god *Asclepius*. The hospitals were known as priests that did the healing were part of an exclusive order. serpent wrapped around a staff.¹⁷ The water in the *asclepeion* believed to have curative powers.



Jerusalem—that it was hospitals.¹⁵ Over four Roman Empire. They *asclepeion*.¹⁶ The Their symbol was a pools were sacred and

These hospitals were state-of-the art, for their day. They potions and minor surgical cures. They had a primitive form of “Hippocrates is said to have received his medical training at an *asclepeion*,”¹⁸ and gained the knowledge of many cures from what he found inscribed on their walls.

offered curative anesthesia.

Evidently the Jews tried to make Bethesda compatible with Judaism. They changed the superstition of the curative waters to include an angel's part: coming from time-to-time to stir it. This coincided—no doubt—with open valves and fresh water being added to the pools.

Visiting the sick on Sabbath must be an old practice because on that Sabbath Jesus went to the hospital at Jerusalem to visit the sick. He saw a hopeless old man—who had been there some 38 years. Moved with compassion, He healed the invalid. He didn't do it secretly. Jesus specifically wanted people to know about it. He wanted people to know *Jesus healed on the Sabbath day!*

Once, Jesus healed a man born blind—also on a Sabbath. He spat on the ground. He made clay on the Sabbath—clay packs to put on the man's eyes; and He sent him to the *Pool of Siloam* to wash. Referring to this act, the Spirit of Prophecy tells us that while Jesus “did not give countenance to drug medication, He sanctioned the use of simple and natural remedies.”¹⁹

The priests drew water for the sanctuary services from the *Pool of Siloam*—it wasn't a healthcare facility; it was a religious institution. But Bethesda *was* a healthcare facility. Jesus didn't use the waters, cures, or healing rituals *there*. He simply said: “Rise, take up thy bed and walk.”

—People Needed to Know

The invalid had been there 38 years. The establishment knew of him. His healing would attract a lot of attention. Carrying a bed on the Sabbath would cause an uproar. *But the people needed to know!* They needed to know the normal healthcare of the day had not healed him—it was a divine work! They needed to know the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus—anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, relieve the oppressed, liberate the captives, heal the afflicted, restore sight to the blind, and reveal the light of truth to the world.

They needed to know the Sabbath is not about counting footsteps; strife and debate; afflicting your soul; bowing down your head like a bulrush—with sackcloth and ashes. It's about loosening the bands of wickedness; undoing heavy burdens; freeing the oppressed; breaking every yoke.

¹⁴ Dr. Lizorkin-Eyzenberg, *The Pool of Bethesda As Greek Asclepion*. July 7, 2016, (<https://israelstudycenter.com/the-pool-of-bethesda-as-greek-asclepion/>), accessed 10-6-2018.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ Randy Niles, *Pool of Bethesda*, September 19, 2016. (<https://www.drivethruhistory.com/pool-of-bethesda/>), accessed 10-6-2018.

¹⁷ Wikipedia, *Rod of Asclepius*, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod_of_Asclepius), accessed 10-6-2018.

¹⁸ Wikipedia, *Asclepeion*, (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asclepeion>), accessed 10-6-2018.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 233.

It's about giving food to the hungry. It's about bringing poor people home; and putting your own clothes on the naked.

They needed to know these things make the Sabbath a delight—not doing your own stuff; going your own way; saying your own words. The Lord's servant admonishes us that Isaiah 58 “marks out the only course that we can follow with safety.” Quoting it, she says,

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.’ Though they are called the people of God, the house of Jacob, though they profess to be linked with God in obedience and fellowship, they are far from Him. Wonderful privileges and promises have been given to them, but they have betrayed their trust. With no words of flattery must the message be given them. ‘Show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.’ Show them where they are making a mistake. Set their danger before them. Tell them of the sins they are committing, while at the same time they pride themselves on their righteousness. Apparently seeking God, they are forgetting Him, forgetting that He is a God of love and compassion, long suffering and goodness, dealing justly and loving mercy. Worldly policy has come into their business and religious life. Their hearts are not purified through the truth. God looks on their outward ceremonies of humility as a solemn mockery. He regards all religious sham as an insult to Himself.”²⁰

—Back at the Nazareth Church

Isaiah pretty-well described what was going on in Israel; and Jesus knew He had to deal with it. But the Nazareth church was now suspicious. They could see the bricks and mortar establishment at Jerusalem didn't impress Jesus much. Their preaching and watered-down *Isaiah seminars* didn't satisfy Him. He didn't subscribe to the teachings of the rabbis. He was an embarrassment and insult to the medical work. Worst of all, He said the most arrogant things. He was from their town, so they were sensitive to this. He seemed to think *He* was the only answer to folk's *physical, intellectual, and spiritual* needs—and that the organization was selling out to the world.

“Little Jesus” was right there in Nazareth—implying that they (His family and friends), were in bondage: were prisoners needing Him to deliver them from the power of evil; were in darkness: needing Him to give them the light of truth! Who did He think He was, anyway? They'll not be so gullible. They'll not buy His claim to be the Messiah—not without some amazing proof.

—The Protocol for Service

Jesus knew their thoughts. They wanted Him to perform miracles to substantiate His claims; but they already knew the truth. The evidence had been mounting for years. They were acquainted with His spotless life. Reports of His public ministry in Judea had been filtering back for more than a year now. Man never taught like this man! Never a man preached as He does! His healing surpasses everything on earth! They know the truth; but they refused to believe the truth.

Sadly, Jesus changes the tone of His Sabbath message. He says,

“I tell you truthfully that there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and great famine swept over all the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon.”²¹

And then He said:

²⁰ Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1149.

²¹ Luke 4:25-26. Berean Study Bible.

“And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet. Yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”²²

Yes, the Sabbath is about going to church and refraining from secular life. It’s about spiritual refreshing and spiritual renewal. The Sabbath is a holy day—guard it as sacred and special. Don’t treat it as common—to please yourself or for your entertainment. It’s the heart of His moral law. It’s the seal of God. Yes, worship God on the Sabbath—put Him first. But selflessly serve others too. The Sabbath is the *protocol for service!*

Jesus instigated Sabbath reform in Judea and in Galilee. We need to instigate it here, today. Even Seventh-day Adventist are wrong about the Sabbath.

“The fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah contains present truth for the people of God. Here we see how medical missionary work and the gospel ministry are to be bound together as the message is given to the world. Upon those who keep the Sabbath of the Lord is laid the responsibility of doing a work of mercy and benevolence. Medical missionary work is bound up with the message, and sealed with the seal of God.”²³

“We need the clear light of the Sun of Righteousness to shine upon us. This light is given to those who keep holy the Lord's Sabbath; but we cannot keep this day holy unless we serve the Lord in the manner brought to view in the scripture: 'Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo every burden, to let the oppressed go free. And that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?' (Isaiah 58:6, 7) This is the work that rests upon every soul who accepts the service of Christ.”²⁴

“We are to work the works of Christ... Isaiah says, 'Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.' This is the work that must be done before Christ shall come in power and great glory.”²⁵

What is Sabbath—*Protocol for Service*? It’s the *Galilee Protocol*. It’s what Jesus came to do. It’s Isaiah 61. It’s Isaiah 58. It’s what we should be doing. It is medical missionary work bound up with the gospel ministry and sealed with the seal of God!

What is the *Galilee Protocol*? It’s a specific method of work whereby we bring relief to the oppressed, liberty to the captives, healing to the afflicted, sight to the blind, and the light of truth to the world. It is working as Christ worked. It’s Christ’s character radiating through the activity of His church.

—How It Looked Back Then

What would that look like today? Probably much like it looked when Jesus did it! This is how Jesus did it. He went to the cities. Once there, He attended the synagogue on Sabbath; and shared His plan for that city—with the Sabbath-keepers there. He showed the details of His mission from the inspired record. Those who liked what said, joined Him.

Then He went to the streets. He knocked on doors. He looked for lost sheep. He specialized in people who knew they needed Him. He found the sick, the poor, the discouraged, and the downcast. Jesus loves everyone—the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, the healthy and the sickly. But He looked for those desperate enough to respond to His gestures of love and mercy—who would accept His peculiar ways and non-establishment methods. They

²² Luke 4:27.

²³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 516.

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 33.

²⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, November 1, 1892.

needed His help. They wanted His help. And His success with them attracted the attention of many high society folks who otherwise would have had no use for Him.

So Jesus often worked with the lowly—He didn't care they were lowly. To Jesus they could be kings and queens. Jesus mingled with them—

"as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boat, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them in their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He carried His instructions into the household, bringing families in their own homes under the influence of His divine presence."²⁶

Jesus feed the poor, and gave them clothes to wear. He touched the infirmed, and He healed their sickness. Jesus showed the guilty how to find forgiveness; He showed the discouraged the way to victory.

Then He took them from the cities to some country retreat—to a mountainside, or a seashore, or to some desert place. The sick, the lame, the simple folk, and everyday people flocked to the countryside to hear and see Jesus. He taught with simple stories. He described the coming kingdom of God.

Soon, Titus and his Roman legionnaires would come and destroy their cities. Millions would be killed, or scattered around the globe. Jesus preached—*Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment was come.*²⁷

After a while, He would tell them He needed to go to other cities—for that is what God sent Him to do.²⁸

—How It Should Look Today

What should the *Galilee Protocol* look like in these last days? Well, the best we can tell from inspiration: it should start out like a small, grass-roots movement. Maybe just a few people, somewhere—folks who conclude they cannot wait any longer for some “compelling power to take hold of them.” They decide “they must act, they must take hold of the work themselves.” They conclude that the “scenes which are passing before them are of sufficient magnitude to cause them to arouse and to urge the truth home to the hearts of all who will listen.”²⁹ They take to heart these words: “The presence of the Lord is ever seen where every energy of the church is aroused to meet the spiritual responsibilities.”³⁰ They make the *Galilee Protocol* their top priority.

From there, it will grow.

“When our churches will fulfill the duty resting upon them, they will be living, working agencies for the Master. The manifestation of Christian love will fill the soul with deeper, more earnest fervor to work for Him who gave His life to save the world... We shall see the medical missionary work broadening and deepening at every point of its progress, because of the inflowing of hundreds and thousands of streams, until the whole earth is covered as the waters cover the sea.”³¹

How does the *Galilee Protocol* look like in these last days? It looks like companies of disciples going to large cities. Finding Adventist churches there, they share their mission as from the inspired record. They recruit disciples to the Master’s work. Then they go to the streets. They knock on doors. They look for lost sheep. They look for people who know they need help. They

²⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

²⁷ See Revelation 14:7; See Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 341.

²⁸ Luke 4:43.

²⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 261.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *Notebook Leaflets*, vol. 1, p. 99.

³¹ *Ibid.* p.18.

look for the sick. They look for the poor. They look for the discouraged and the downcast. They look for those searching for truth.

They tell the stories of the Bible that teach present truth. They set up Bible readings in peoples' homes and in public places. They pray for the sick and teach them to care for their bodies. They share lessons about the laws of health—practical lessons for better cooking, and the therapeutic use of water to promote circulation and healing. They help the poor with food and clothing. They show the guilty the way to Jesus and forgiveness. They lead the discouraged to victory.

After a while, they invite people from the cities to some country retreat—to a mountainside, a seashore, or some desert place. The prophecies are unfolded; and warning given of judgments soon to fall on the cities and the world. They describe Christ's eminent return in the clouds of glory; they unmask the counterfeit works of the antichrist. They talk of the mark of the beast. They tell of the time of trouble; and the seven last plagues. They clearly present the seventh-day Sabbath, and the binding, uncompromising nature of God's law—in both health and moral matters.

They boldly present Jesus, the only mediator between God and man—our only answer for *physical, mental, and spiritual* restoration. They present Jesus, the sin bearer—who chose Calvary's cross so they might choose life. They present Jesus, a personal, loving Savior—who wants to be the closest friend of every child of humanity. They present Jesus—the fullness of divine power offering Himself freely to everyone desiring freedom from the chains of sin.

After a while, they go to other cities—for that is what God *sent* them to do.³²

What does the *Galilee Protocol* look like in these last days? It's not rocket science, really. It's good old-fashioned Adventism—an old-fashioned Adventism that has yet to ever really catch on. But it will. What does the *Galilee Protocol* look like in these last days? Well—if only we would *reactivate* the *Galilee Protocol* in these last days—I think it would look a lot like Jesus. Don't you?

³² Matthew 10:5-13.