



[John 7:21-24](#)

(21) Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. (22) Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. (23) If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? (24) Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

New King James Version

The Jews considered circumcising on the [Sabbath](#) a lawful Sabbath activity. Why? The Bible does not give a direct answer. It is in this point that [Jesus](#) nailed them to the wall! The Jews knew why circumcision was lawful on the Sabbath: It was a redemptive act because circumcision was an Israelite lad's introduction to entering the covenant. So circumcision was a redemptive act, even as today we consider [baptism](#) a redemptive act. And we rightly, lawfully, will baptize people on the Sabbath.

The Jews' reasoning was that it is lawful and right to cut off a piece of skin from one of the 248 (by their count) parts of the body to save the whole man by making this person a part of the covenant. Christ's reasoning, then, was that works of salvation are accomplished, not only by the Father, but also by His servants, who are His agents. In this case, the priests did the work of circumcision. And the Jews considered it lawful.

Jesus' reasoning is beautiful: "If you can do this act to save a man, why can't I also make a person whole and save his physical life on the Sabbath?" He says, "This is the work of God." It is redeeming somebody, setting him free, giving him liberty.

For Christ, the Sabbath is the day to work for the salvation of the whole person, physically and spiritually. If it is legal to cut off a part of a boy's body on the Sabbath because of the covenant, they have no reason to be angry with Him for mercifully restoring a person to wholeness. His opponents, however, cannot perceive this. It somehow does not enter their minds. We can understand why: [God](#) just was not working with them yet - it was almost as if they had blinders on. They could not perceive the saving nature of His work. To them, the pallet ([John 5:8](#)) and the clay ([John 9:15](#)) were more important than the healed man himself.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Fourth Commandment \(Part 3\)](#)



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