

Matthew 12:1-8 The Lord of the Sabbath

Introduction: “At that time” refers to the time when Jesus had finished delivering His sermon at Capernaum. He had invited men to salvation (Come unto me), to dedication (take my yoke) and to education, (learn of me).

I. The occasion, Verse 1.

- A. Jesus takes His disciples aside.
(Probably the apostles who had earlier been sent out to preach.)
- B. The disciples got hungry.
- C. To satisfy their hunger they pulled a few heads of grain.
 - 1. They rubbed the grain in their hands to rub off the husk. (According to Luke.)
 - 2. Then they ate the raw grains. (Barley or wheat)
 - 3. It was not much of a meal, but it helped.

II. The criticism, Verse 2.

- A. The Pharisees were watching and criticized.
 - 1. They said, “Aha! We’ve got you. Your disciples broke the Law.”
 - 2. They did not say a word to the disciples, but to Jesus.
 - 3. They were not concerned about the disciples; they were out to criticize Jesus.
- B. They did not charge them with stealing, because the Law itself provided for eating out of another's field, Deuteronomy 23:25.
- C. The Law did forbid labor on the sabbath, Exodus 20:9-10.
 - 1. No cooking. Specifically it forbid kindling a fire, Exodus 35:2-3.
 - 2. It pronounced the death penalty of the offender.
 - 3. One was put to death because he gathered sticks for a fire, Numbers 15:32-36.
- D. But the law did not forbid eating on the sabbath.
 - 1. Particularly it should be noted that the grains were uncooked.
(They did not kindle a fire.)
 - 2. The effort that it took to pull them and rub them is a far cry from labor.
(No more than scratching the ear.)
- E. The criticism was obviously undue and motivated out of prejudice.

III. The Lord's answer, Verses 3-7.

- A. “Have ye not read (the scripture)?” Verse 3.
- B. David ate shewbread, verses 3-4; 1 Samuel 21.
 - 1. David and his men were hungry and the priest gave them shewbread out of the tabernacle.
 - 2. There was no provision in the law for lay people to eat it.
 - 3. Yet neither was there any specific word forbidding it.
 - 4. Jesus said they were blameless. (Broke no law.)
 - 5. This was not the thing to do under normal circumstances, but the need justified it.
(Which it could not have done if the law had been broken.)
- C. The Law itself requires the priests to labor on the sabbath, Numbers 28: 9-10.
 - 1. This was a lot more work than rubbing grain.
 - 2. And it was on the temple grounds.
 - 3. Why did not the Pharisees accuse the priests?

- D. A greater than the temple is here, verse 6.
 - 1. Not “greater person” but “greater thing.” (Neuter Greek)
 - 2. The work of the Messiah was a greater work than the work of the temple. (The New Testament church greater than the Old Testament temple.)
 - 3. It is alright for the hungry disciples to eat a few grains on the sabbath, even if they do have to pluck them and rub them.
- E. Another scripture the Pharisees misunderstood was Hosea 6:6, (Verse 7.)
 - 1. Sacrifices were made under the Law.
 - 2. If the law took priority over all else then sacrifices should be preferred to mercy.
 - 3. But the Lord prefers to show mercy than to have sacrifices.
 - 4. Thus the Pharisees should have been more concerned about mercy to the hungry disciples than the meager labor of rubbing the grain.
 - 5. This is so even if the disciples had been guilty, which they were not. (They were guiltless. They broke no law.)

IV. The crux of the matter, Verse 8.

- A. The Pharisees were trying to explain the law to Jesus. (They thought they were the experts.)
- B. But Jesus is the very Lord of the sabbath.
 - 1. He instituted the sabbath. (He was the first to observe the sabbath and the One to give the orders for man also to observe it.)
 - 2. He gave the Law to Moses.
 - 3. He knew all about the Law and if His disciples had transgressed the Law, He would have known it.

V. The super-critics of today.

- A. Many today have made up their minds in opposition to Jesus and His cause.
 - 1. There is no fault in Him.
 - 2. Therefore they criticize His disciples.
 - 3. They criticize His preachers; His deacons; the Sunday School teachers; and virtually every member of the Lord's churches.
- B. It is bad enough that God's people do have faults, but the worst thing is that these are people who set against the Lord determined to find something wrong that they can use as an excuse.

Conclusion:

- 1. What the unsaved man needs to do is to repent of his own sin and stop worrying about the faults of Christians. (Put salvation above their faults.)
- 2. What the saved man needs to do is to put the cause above the faults of his fellow Christians. (The greatest cause in the world. Greater than the temple.)
- 3. And if there is one church that he cannot work in, then surely there is one where he can work.

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