

# Matthew 12

## Matthew 12:1-21 - The King of the Sabbath!

### Scriptures:

Deuteronomy 23:24-25 -  
When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. 25 When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.

<sup>1</sup> At that time Jesus went through the

grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples

G4521 -

were hungry, and began to pluck heads of

grain and to eat.

### Notes:

From the way Matthew was inspired to write this section, it appears that it flowed immediately after the end of chapter 11. In verses 28 and 29 Jesus says He is the source of rest.

God rested on the seventh day and called it the Sabbath. The Jewish reckoning of time is different than our own. The first day of the week begins at sundown on Saturday. The seventh day of the week (Sabbath) begins at sundown on Friday.

The Sabbath is a remembrance of God resting on the seventh day of creation. God then gave the descendants of Abraham through Moses the Sabbath as a day of rest from their regular work so that they could think about and worship God. Over time the Jews shifted the focus more heavily to worship and then increasingly made Sabbath a religious exercise. The Sabbath rules became so burdensome that it became difficult to rest or worship.

The Sabbath would be a significant point of conflict with the religious Jews. At this point in history, Judaism had developed into a very legalistic religion.

The Law of Moses allowed for this kind of thing ([Deuteronomy 23:24-25](#)). If someone was hungry and away from home, they could eat their fill from the fields of others.

Scriptures:

Mark 7:6-8 - He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

Exodus 35:2 - Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.

2 And when the Pharisees saw <sup>P</sup> <sup>oo</sup> <sup>P</sup> it, they said to

<sup>±</sup> <sup>oo</sup> <sup>±</sup> <sup>12</sup> Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what

<sup>PA</sup> <sup>7D</sup> is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

G1832 -

Notes:

The Pharisees were a sect of Judaism that insisted on strict adherence to the Law of Moses. They developed a list of 613 rules that had to be followed to be considered a good Jew. Jesus came along and turned many of those rules on their head because they did not come from God (Mark 7:6-8). The Jews were called to take the Sabbath seriously (Exodus 35:2).

According to the Law of Moses no regular work was allowed on the Sabbath. Someone interpreted the plucking of a handful of grain and rubbing it between your hands as harvesting and threshing. Jesus will challenge their interpretation of the Law.

Scriptures:

3 But He said to them, "Have you not

Notes:

read what David did when he was hungry, he

and those who were with him:

Scriptures:

4 how he entered the house of God and

Notes:

'showbread' – Every Sabbath, the priest on duty in the tabernacle or the temple would set out twelve loaves of bread – one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. These loaves were to remind them of God's miraculous provision of manna in the forty years in the wilderness. The old bread was to be eaten by the priest and his family.

ate the showbread which was not lawful for

G4286 – Bread of the Presence.

Jesus is reminding them of the time David, while he was fleeing from King Saul, asked the priest Ahimelech for something to eat. All the priest had was the showbread that had been replaced. David was hungry and the priest gave him the only thing he had. Jesus is saying that what Ahimelech did was good and right, even though it wasn't 'lawful'.

him to eat, nor for those who were with

him, but only for the priests?

Scriptures:

Numbers 28:9-10 - And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering— 10 this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.

<sup>5</sup> Or have you not read in the law that on the

Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the

G953 – desecrate.

Notes:

Every Sabbath the priests do their regular work (Numbers 28:9-10).

<sup>7D</sup> Sabbath, and are blameless?

G338 – innocent.

Scriptures:

1 Corinthians 3:16 - Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

<sup>6</sup> Yet I say to you that in this place there

is One greater than the temple.

G3187 – having higher status.

Notes:

The Jews associated God's presence with the tabernacle/temple. The temple existed as a place where people could focus their worship of God. It was not God! Most Jews would never have an encounter with God, not even in the temple. Jesus, God in the flesh, was right there.

As believers, we are the temple of God and God the Holy Spirit dwells within us (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Scriptures:  
Hosea 6:6 - For I desire  
mercy and not sacrifice,  
And the knowledge of  
God more than burnt  
offerings.

7 But if you had known what *this* means,

Notes:  
This is a quote from (Hosea 6:6).  
Jesus also quoted this verse in  
(Matthew 9:13). Then the Pharisees  
were questioning Jesus about eating  
with 'tax collectors and sinners.'

*'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,* you would

G2309 -

G1656 -

G2378 -

The Pharisees were judging the  
disciples as lawbreakers. Jesus then  
accuses them of not understanding  
the meaning of the Scriptures. This  
ought to serve as a warning to  
anyone who might be tempted to  
judge or condemn others. In humility  
we ought to seek the Lord for His  
wisdom and discernment. We also  
ought to ask God if mercy is the right  
response.

not have condemned the guiltless.

G2613 – judge, be  
critical.

G338 -

Scriptures:

8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the

Notes:

G2962 – "Lord,  
supernatural  
master over all"

<sup>7D</sup>  
Sabbath."

Scriptures:

9 Now when He had departed from there, He

Notes:

went into their synagogue.

Scriptures:

10 And behold, there was a man who had a

Notes:

They had no interest in healing the man. Their only thought was trapping Jesus into doing or saying something they could accuse Him of. They do not appear to express any compassion for the suffering of this man. It is likely that his hand had been withered for a long time, possibly even from birth. In their minds, this was an impossible thing, and so may have felt justified to use this man's suffering as a weapon against Jesus.

withered hand. And they asked Him,

G3584 -

saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—

G1832 –  
permissible.

that they might accuse Him.

G2723 – bring  
charges against.

Scriptures:

11 Then He said to them, "What man is there

Notes:

among you who has one sheep, and if it falls

into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it

and lift *it* out?

Scriptures:

12 Of how much more value then is a man

G1308 -

Notes:

The Sabbath is a rest from working but it is not a day of resting from doing good.

"No ordinance of God is to be pressed so far as to make us neglect the plain duties of love." (Ryle, 1993) page 91

than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do

good on the Sabbath."



Scriptures:

13 Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your

hand." And he stretched *it* out, and

it was restored as whole as the other.

G600 -

Notes:

This was a deliberate act on Jesus' part to confront the Pharisees with their hard-hearted legalism that was contrary to God's heart. Jesus didn't have to heal the man on the Sabbath, but He did to expose their wrong understanding of God and His Word.

Scriptures:  
John 15:18-19 - If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

14 Then the Pharisees went out and plotted

G4824/G2983 –  
planning/to take.

against Him, how they might destroy Him.

G622 -

Notes:  
It would be impossible to deny that a radical miracle had taken place, but they were so blinded by their religion that this man had just been delivered from a lifetime of bondage to the infirmity of a withered hand.

Religious legalism always leads to hardness of heart toward the suffering of others.

For what sin were they determined to destroy Jesus for? What great offence caused them to hate Jesus so much? Why are they so hostile toward Jesus? The unconverted person hates God. They may or may not express that hatred but when confronted with holiness and godliness, that hatred will present itself. It should surprise no true believer in Christ when someone objects to your example of Christ. They are not responding to you but to the God who is living out of you. Jesus warned us that being hated was one of the costs of being one of His disciples (John 15:18-19).

We might imagine that if we are good enough, or kind enough, or holy enough, that the world will leave us alone. Jesus was the only perfect man who has ever lived, and they hated Him and nailed Him to a cross.

The world might accuse the church of hypocrisy or judgmentalism as the reason why they hate the church. They don't hate the church for any other reason than because they hate God. Everything else is just excuses to help them to feel better about their hatred.

Scriptures:

15 But when Jesus knew <sup>it</sup> *it*, He withdrew from

Notes:

there. And great multitudes followed Him,

and He <sup>+</sup> <sup>+</sup> healed them all.

Scriptures:

16 Yet He <sup>+</sup> <sup>+</sup> warned them not to make Him

Notes:

known,

Scriptures:

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken

Notes:

(Isaiah 42:1-4) – The Old Testament has hundreds of prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. Many of them were fulfilled in Christ's first coming. The rest will be fulfilled in His second coming.

by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

Scriptures:

18 *"Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,*

Notes:

All three persons of the Triune Godhead are mentioned in these verses.

*My Beloved in whom My soul is well*

*pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He*

*will declare justice to the Gentiles.*

Scriptures:

19 *He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will*

Notes:

*anyone hear His voice in the streets.*

Scriptures:

20 *A bruised reed He will not break, and*

*smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends*

*forth justice to victory;*

Notes:

A 'bruised reed' is weak. Jesus will not put so great a burden on someone that believing in Jesus will crush them. With the weak, Jesus is tender and gentle.

A 'smoking flax' is a picture of someone whose faith is weak. This could be a believer who struggles with sin and repentance. It is all smoke and no fire. Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to blow gently on that ember until it bursts into flame.

Weak faith is better than no faith. Because Jesus is so compassionate, He reaches out to the weak ones more than the strong ones.

This should be a comfort to anyone who might despair over the quality or measure of their faith. It should encourage those who struggle to gain a victory over the sin in their lives. Jesus is going to work with what you have until He achieves the victory.

The tiniest spark of faith is better than the utter darkness of unbelief. Don't let the great deceiver, Satan tell you that you are not good enough for Jesus. The tiniest bit of faith can move mountains and it moves the heart of God.

Scriptures:

21 *And in His name Gentiles will trust."*

Notes:

Jesus often told people not to tell anyone of the miracles He performed on them. This is because Jesus didn't want to be known as a miracle worker. He came to preach the message of the kingdom of God. The miracles served only to confirm His teaching and to relieve human suffering.

It was a common belief held by Jews that Gentiles were beyond the salvation of God. This is hard to fathom since so many Scriptures, like this one, say that God intends to save the Gentiles. God chose the Jews as His special people so that He could save the rest of the world through them.

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