

Mark 2:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

Analysis

This verse introduces a Sabbath controversy: Jesus' disciples 'plucked the ears of corn' as they walked through grainfields on the Sabbath. The imperfect tense indicates ongoing action. Deuteronomy 23:25 permitted this, but Pharisaic tradition classified it as 'harvesting' and thus Sabbath-work violation. The disciples' action was legal concerning property rights but questionable concerning Sabbath observance according to oral tradition. Jesus permits this, implying that Sabbath law permits necessary provision. Reformed theology emphasizes that Christ is Lord of the Sabbath (v. 28), with authority to interpret its proper observance.

Historical Context

The Sabbath commanded rest from work, commemorating creation rest and exodus deliverance. The fourth commandment prohibited work but didn't detail specific activities. Jewish tradition developed 39 categories of prohibited work, including harvesting—all arguably violated by plucking grain. Pharisees built 'fences around the law.' By Jesus' time, Sabbath observance had become burden rather than blessing. Early Christians transferred Sabbath principle to Sunday worship, emphasizing rest in Christ's finished work.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do religious traditions sometimes obscure God's original intent in His commands?
2. In what ways do you treat Sabbath rest legalistically rather than gratefully?
3. How does understanding Christ as Lord of the Sabbath free you from legalistic bondage?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐγένετο παραπορεύεσθαι αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς
And it came to pass that he went his on G3588
G2532 G1096 G3899 G846 G1722

σάββασιν διὰ τῶν σπορίμων καὶ ἤρξαντο οἱ
the sabbath day through the corn fields And began G3588
G4521 G1223 G3588 G4702 G2532 G756

μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὁδὸν ποιεῖν τίλλοντες τοὺς
disciples his as they went to pluck G3588
G3101 G846 G3598 G4160 G5089

στάχυας
the ears of corn
G4719