

Mark 2:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

Analysis

Jesus provides historical specificity: David entered 'the house of God' during 'Abiathar the high priest.' He 'did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests,' and 'gave also to them which were with him.' David didn't merely eat forbidden bread himself but shared it with his men—compounding the ceremonial violation. Despite this, Scripture records no divine judgment, suggesting God prioritized mercy and human need over ceremonial restriction. Jesus' point is powerful: if God excused David's violation to meet physical hunger, how much more does Jesus have authority to permit disciples to pluck grain on Sabbath for legitimate need?

Historical Context

The showbread (לֶחֶם הַפָּנִים, 'bread of the Presence') consisted of twelve loaves representing Israel's tribes, placed weekly on the golden table, eaten by priests when replaced. David's eating it demonstrated that human survival takes precedence—the very principle Jesus applies. The reference to 'Abiathar' presents a textual challenge—1 Samuel 21:1 identifies Ahimelech (Abiathar's father). Solutions include: 'in the days of Abiathar' referring to his era broadly, or both serving together.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's mercy toward David's violation demonstrate that law's purpose is redemptive?
2. In what areas do you prioritize religious ritual over genuine human need?
3. What does this passage teach about God's heart for mercy over sacrifice?

Interlinear Text

πῶς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ
How **he went** **into** G3588 **the house** G3588 **of God** **in the days**
G4459 G1525 G1519 G3624 G2316 G1909

Ἀβιαθὰρ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ τοὺς ἄρτους τῆς
of Abiathar G3588 **the high priest** **also** G3588 **the shewbread** G3588
G8 G749 G2532 G740

προθέσεως φαγεῖν οὓς οὐκ ἔξεστιν φαγεῖν εἰ μὴ
G4286 **did eat** **which** **not** **is** **did eat** G1487 G3361
G5315 G3739 G3756 G1832 G5315

τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν καὶ ἔδωκεν καὶ τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ
G3588 **the priests** **also** **gave** **also** G3588 **with** **him**
G2409 G2532 G1325 G2532 G4862 G846

οἷσιν
to them which were
G5607

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 8:17 (Parallel theme): And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and Seraiah was the scribe;

1 Chronicles 24:6 (Parallel theme): And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, one of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and before the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and one taken for Ithamar.

1 Samuel 21:1 (Parallel theme): Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org