

Matthew 12:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

Analysis

Conflict arises on Sabbath: 'At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat' (εν εκεινω τω καιρω επορευθη ο Ιησους τοις σαββασιν δια των σποριμων οι δε μαθηται αυτου επεινασαν και ηρξαντο τιλλειν σταχυας και εσθιειν). 'Sabbath' (σαββασιν) was day of rest (Exodus 20:8-11). 'Corn' (σποριμων) is grain fields. Deuteronomy 23:25 permitted plucking grain from others' fields by hand. The disciples weren't stealing but exercising legitimate provision for hunger. Pharisees objected not to taking grain but to 'work' on Sabbath. They considered plucking and rubbing grain as harvesting and threshing—Sabbath violations. This conflict reveals legalism's corruption: prioritizing tradition over mercy, external compliance over human need.

Historical Context

Pharisaic tradition (Mishnah) identified thirty-nine categories of Sabbath work, including reaping and threshing. Plucking grain fell under reaping; rubbing heads to remove chaff constituted threshing. These traditions transformed Sabbath from blessing to burden. Jesus consistently clashed with Pharisaic Sabbath interpretation (healing on Sabbath, allowing disciples' actions). He insisted Sabbath served humanity, not vice versa (Mark 2:27). Early church's shift from Saturday Sabbath to Sunday worship reflected Jesus' Sabbath reinterpretation and resurrection on first day.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does legalism transform God's blessings into burdens?
2. What is the proper relationship between Sabbath rest and human need?
3. How can we avoid pharisaic tendencies in contemporary rule-keeping?

Interlinear Text

Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ ἐπορεύθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῖς
At that G3588 time G2540 went G4198 Jesus G2424 G3588
G1722 G1565 G1223 G4702 G3588 G1161 G3101
σάββασιν διὰ τῶν σπορίμων· οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ¹
on the sabbath day through the corn and disciples
G4521 G1223 G4702 G3588 G1161 G3101
αὐτοῦ ἐπείνασαν καὶ ἤρξαντο τίλλειν στάχυας καὶ
his were an hungry and began to pluck the ears of corn and
G846 G3983 G2532 G756 G5089 G4719 G2532
ἐσθίειν
to eat
G2068

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 23:25 (Parallel theme): When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

