



Lesson 235

The Lord of the Sabbath

Story Elements

- **Text:** Matt.12:1-21 (also Mark 2:23-3:12; Luke 6:1-11)
 - **Setting:** circa AD 28, probably in Galilee on the way back from Jerusalem¹
 - **Characters:** God, Jesus, the disciples, and the Pharisees
 - **Plot:** Jesus continues to heal on a second and third consecutive sabbath, increasing not only the anger of conspiring opponents but also the size of the following multitudes.
 - **Key word(s):** “_____ of the sabbath” – Previously (John 5), Jesus defended his authority to work **on** the sabbath; this time, he will proclaim his Lordship **over** the sabbath.
- **Climax:** **Matthew 12:6** *But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.* In this climactic moment, Jesus defends his disciples by showing they serve One more sacred than the temple.

Review

1. (John 5:1-47) Jesus and his disciples journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate a feast – though not named it was probably the Passover. While in Jerusalem, Jesus healed a man on the sabbath, which sparked a controversy. Jesus defended himself with a sermon wherein he undeniably equated himself with God.

Empty Stomachs

2. (vv 1-2) On a sabbath day, while walking on a path near a grain² field, the disciples plucked³ grain to eat. Notice two details here:
 - (a) The disciples were _____ – Spurgeon expounds, “We incidentally learn from this story that our Lord and His disciples were poor, and that He who fed the multitudes did not use His miraculous power to feed His own followers but left them till they did what poor men are forced to do to supply a little stay for their stomachs. Our Lord bribes none into following Him. They may be His apostles and yet be hungry on a Sabbath.”⁴

APPLICATION➔ Here is an example of how Christ “emptied himself” by refusing to access his divine powers except when it was _____ to fulfill the Father’s will.

- (b) The Pharisees were _____ – They believed the disciples of Jesus had broken the sabbath in two ways: by reaping (plucking grain) and by sifting (*rubbing them in their hands*, Luke 6:1).

APPLICATION➔ The Pharisees preached absurd, contradictory, and hypocritical laws regarding the sabbath. Alfred Edersheim demonstrates, “One instance will suffice to show the externalism of all these ordinances. If a man wished to move a sheaf on his field, which of course implied labour, he had only to lay upon it a spoon that was in his common use, when, in order to remove the spoon, he might also remove the sheaf on which it lay! And yet it was forbidden to stop with a little wax the hole in a cask by which the fluid was running out, or to wipe a wound!”⁵

¹ A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922) 44.

² The term *corn* means *grain*; what Americans call *corn* is called *maize* in the UK (from whence comes our King James translation).

³ “The barley harvest seems clearly intended here, at the close of our March and beginning of our April. It coincided with the Passover season, as the wheat harvest with Pentecost.”

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, vol. 2* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 39.

⁴ Charles Spurgeon, *An Exposition of Matthew, the Gospel of the Kingdom* (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2015) 84.

⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971) Book III, 56.

3. (vv 1-8) When the Pharisees confronted Jesus with his disciples' alleged sabbath-breaking, he defended their actions along three lines:
- (a) (vv 3-4) He mentioned how David and his men ate of the shewbread that was in the tabernacle (1 Sam 21:1-6). "As men excuse any breach of manners necessitated by the pressure of hunger, so doth the Lord permit any ceremonial point of law to give way to His mercy and to man's evident necessity... **Works of _____ are lawful on the Sabbath.**"⁶
 - (b) (vv 5-6) Jesus pointed out how the priests labored on the sabbath but were permitted to do so because they served the Lord in the temple. The disciples, likewise, were serving the Lord as they travelled with Jesus. "**Works of _____ are lawful on the Sabbath.**"⁷

APPLICATION → Edersheim explains the force of Jesus' word, *in this place is one greater than the temple*: "The priests worked on the Sabbath, because this service was the object of the Sabbath; and David was allowed to eat of the shewbread, not because there was danger to life from starvation, but because he pleaded that he was on the service of the Lord and needed this provision. The disciples, when following the Lord, were similarly on the service of the Lord; ministering to Him was more than ministering in the Temple, for He was greater than the Temple."⁸

- (c) (v 7) The Lord rebuked the Pharisees for their failure to recognize the spirit of the law because they were legalistically focused on the letter of the law, saying, *But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice* (Hosea 6:6), *ye would not have condemned the guiltless.* "**Works of _____ are lawful on the Sabbath.**"⁹
4. (v 9) Jesus finishes his remarks with a declaration of authority - not of mere liberty outside of sabbath laws, but of complete _____ over the sabbath itself. The Lord of the Sabbath can do with the Sabbath as he pleases.

Withered Hand

5. (v 10) On another sabbath (Luke 6:6) Jesus went to a synagogue.
- (a) In the crowd of worshippers was a man with a withered hand; the ever-watchful Pharisees were there to see if Jesus would heal the man so they could find fault *that they might _____ him.*
 - (b) (vv 11-12) Jesus, knowing their thoughts and and angered by their hard hearts (Mark 3:5) asked, *What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a _____ better than a sheep?*
 - (c) (v 13) Jesus then commanded the man to hold out his withered hand, and Jesus made it *whole, like as the other.*
 - (d) (v 14) The Pharisees left to plot Christ's destruction. Luke's gospel records *that they were filled with _____.*
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Answer Key: Key word(s): "lord" • 2. a) hungry; → necessary; b) angry • 3. a) necessity; b) piety; c) mercy • 4. authority • 5. a) accuse; b) man; d) madness

⁶ Spurgeon, 85.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Edersheim, 58.

⁹ Spurgeon.