



THE GOSPEL OF
MATTHEW



Lord of the Sabbath

Matthew 12:1–8



Matthew 12:1–2

¹ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”



Matthew 12:3–5

³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?”



Matthew 12:6–8

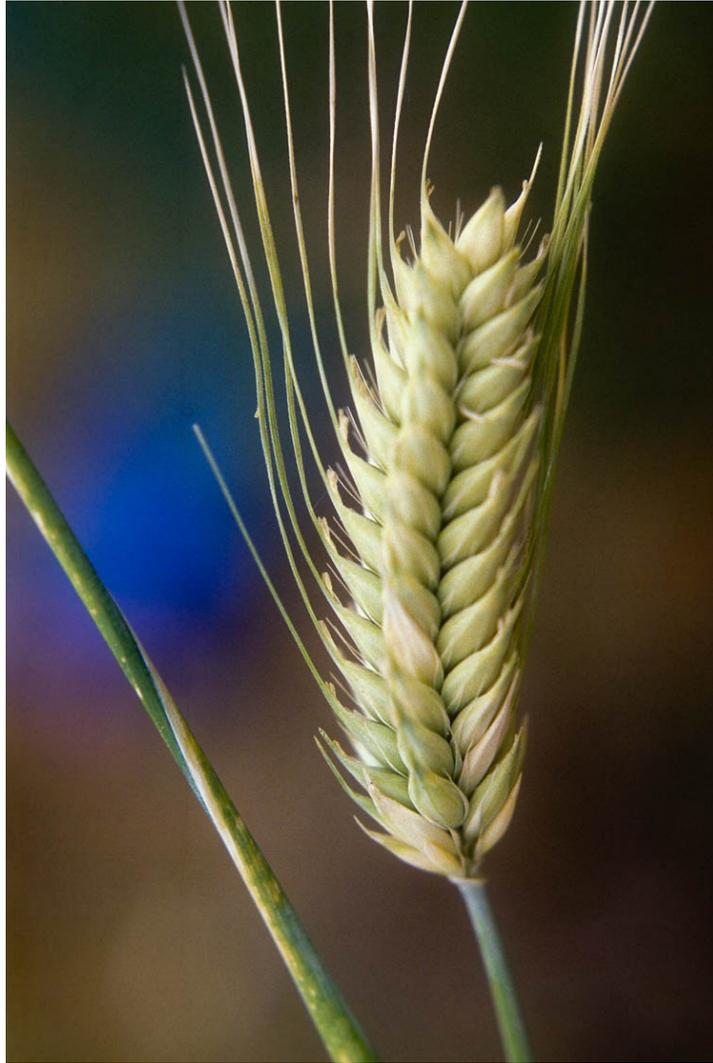
⁶ “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”



1. The crushing weight of legalism (12:1–2)

¹ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”









Mishnah, Shabbat 7:2

The generative categories of acts of labor [prohibited on the Sabbath] are forty less one: (1) he who sews, (2) ploughs, (3) reaps, (4) binds sheaves, (5) threshes, (6) winnows, (7) selects [fit from unfit produce or crops], (8) grinds, (9) sifts, (10) kneads, (11) bakes; (12) he who shears wool, (13) washes it, (14) beats it, (15) dyes it; (16) spins, (17) weaves, (18) makes two loops, (19) weaves two threads, (20) separates two threads; (21) ties, (22) unties, (23) sews two stitches, (24) tears in order to sew two stitches;



Mishnah, Shabbat 7:2

(25) he who traps a deer, (26) slaughters it, (27) flays it, (28) salts it, (29) cures its hide, (30) scrapes it, and (31) cuts it up; (32) he who writes two letters, (33) erases two letters in order to write two letters; (34) he who builds, (35) tears down; (36) he who puts out a fire, (37) kindles a fire; (38) he who hits with a hammer; (39) he who transports an object from one domain to another—lo, these are the forty generative acts of labor less one.



Some Possible Violations

reaping	plucking the heads of grain
threshing	breaking the heads of grain
winnowing	blowing away the husk/chaff
selecting	choosing between the good/bad



2. The merciful Lord of rest (12:3–8)

³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?”



2. The merciful Lord of rest (12:3–8)

A. David ate the holy bread that only the priests were allowed to eat (12:3–4).

³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?”





2. The merciful Lord of rest (12:3–8)

B. The priests do temple work on the Sabbath to obey God's law (12:5).

⁵ “Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?”



The Priests Working on the Sabbath



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- 1) The priests worked to offer special Sabbath sacrifices (Num 28:9–10).
- 2) The priests worked to prepare the holy bread each Sabbath (1 Chron 9:32).
- 3) The priests worked to circumcise male Jewish infants on the Sabbath (Lev 12:3; Jn 7:22–23).



2. The merciful Lord of rest (12:3–8)

C. Jesus and his incoming kingdom are greater than the temple (12:6).

⁶ “I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.”



2. The merciful Lord of rest (12:3–8)

D. God wants warm-hearted mercy over mere rituals (12:7).

⁷ “And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”



Hosea 6:6 — “I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice.”

Matthew 12:7 — “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”

What God Desires

1 Sam 15:22	“obeying the voice of the LORD” “to obey... and to listen”
Ps 40:6–8	“an open ear... delight to do your will”
Ps 50:9, 23	“offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice” “orders his way rightly”
Prov 21:3	“To do righteousness and justice”
Isa 1:11–20	“cease to do evil, learn to do good” “seek justice, correct oppression” “bring justice to the fatherless... widow”
Jer 7:22–23	“Obey my voice” “walk in all the way that I command you”
Mic 6:6–8	“to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”



2. The merciful Lord of rest (12:3–8)

E. Jesus the Son of Man is Lord of holy rest (12:8).

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