

The Growing Conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees

📖 Matthew 12:1-8

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We've said that in Matt 11:20 there is a marked shift in Jesus' tone from a Shepherd, wanting to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel to a Judge, pronouncing judgment on entire cities of Israel. The significance of this shift is stated by Barnhouse who said that this is the beginning of the final rejection. From here the intensity of the rejection will only grow.

In light of the rejection already in process Jesus in 11:25-30 invited those who had believed in His Messiahship to come to Him and learn new truths about the kingdom. 11:25 reveals that this came about by way of a behind the scenes discussion between the Father and the Son. In the midst of that private discussion "Jesus answered" verbally saying, "I proclaim You [to be], Father, Lord of heaven and earth." The term "Father" is used generally of God's Fatherhood over all creation but more specifically of God's Fatherhood of Israel despite their rejection of His Son. The description of the Father as "Lord of heaven and earth" is used to disclose that He was still sovereign over the universe despite Israel's rejection of His Son. Ultimately the universal rule of God cannot be infringed upon by the rejection of His people. God is still in control. Jesus then further proclaims "that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants." What was now being hidden from the wise and intelligent and revealed to infants are new truths about the kingdom in light of the rejection. The wise and intelligent are the Pharisees. They were wise and intelligent in their own eyes and this autonomy was their downfall. They were not willing to learn from the Son and so further truths would be hidden from them. The infants are those who had believed in the Messiahship of Jesus. They were infants in that they were humble and willing to learn from the Son. He will invite them in 11:28 to come to Him and learn new truths about the kingdom revealed exclusively to them. In 11:26 Jesus expands upon the term "Father" saying, "Yes, Father, for this was well-pleasing in Your sight." The Son agrees with the Father that it was well-pleasing to hide new truths from those who had rejected old truths and to reveal new truths to those who had accepted old truths. In 11:27 the Father and Son are viewed as being one equal in essence and distinct in person and in the order of rank the Father is the head of the Son. "All things had been handed over to Me by My Father" shows that The father is head of the Son and that the Son is distinct in person from the Father. "and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son," shows that the Father and the Son are equal in

essence, both having exhaustive knowledge of one another and yet again, distinct in person. "and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" shows that the Son is distinct in person from the Father and yet that the two are in agreement in that the same one's the Father had decided to hide truth from and reveal truth to are the one's Jesus will hide from and reveal to. In 11:28 Jesus extends the invitation to learn to the infants saying, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden." Those who were weary were weary of searching for the truth in Pharisaism. Those who were heavy-laden were burdened with all the ritual procedures of Pharisaism. Jesus would "give" them "rest." In 11:29, to take Jesus yoke upon them would be to enter into His school where He was the Master Teacher and they would "learn" from Him. His teaching was not like the Pharisees who were overly impressed with themselves and interested in showmanship, but rather Jesus was meek and humble meaning strong but not overly impressed with Himself and not interested in what others thought. If they would come to Him and enter His school of discipleship they would find rest for their souls that had been deprived for so long under religious burdens. In 11:30 He declares that His school was the opposite of the Pharisees. Their school was difficult in that it was weighted down with added legislation; His school was easy in that it was a joyful and pleasurable experience of simply enjoying Him who was both the embodiment of the Law and its Perfect Teacher. His burden was light meaning not weighed down with all the Pharisaic religious scruples.

In short, in light of the rejection in process Jesus in 11:25-30 invited those who had believed in His Messiahship to separate from the Pharisees entirely, come to Him, enter His school and learn new truths about the kingdom. These new truths relate to the postponement of the kingdom's arrival in history. These postponement truths will be revealed in Matt 13 in parable form. The teaching in parables is designed to hide these truths from the wise and intelligent and reveal them to babes. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear will understand the postponement truths when we get there. Anyone who thinks the kingdom is the church or is here now in some form simply does not understand these truths.

Tonight we see the first of five illustrations that give further evidence of the rejection in Matt 12:1-8. Toussaint said "As yet the choice is an inner one, but as a result of this decision the opposition to the King develops and becomes more open."¹ The opposition is led by none other than the Pharisees. Morgan observed that initially the Pharisees had been friendly to Jesus but when Jesus pronounced forgiveness of sins in Matt 9:1-8 the hostility of the Pharisees began. Then when Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners in Matt 9:9-13 the hostility of the Pharisees increased. And now when Jesus and His disciples do things on the Sabbath that contradict the Pharisees Sabbath regulations in Matt 12:1-8 their hostility reaches a climax. Walvoord agrees saying, "The growing rejection of the Pharisees, who earlier had been friendly to Jesus, becomes apparent in this chapter."² Glasscock is pretty good when he says, "Chapter 12 continues with evidence of growing hostility between people of two realms; those who had been entrusted with the truth but perverted it through their religion; and the Messiah Himself, who had come to proclaim truth and expose the emptiness of the self-righteous religionists."³

The first two illustrations relate to the Sabbath. Perhaps Matthew recorded these two illustrations about the Sabbath without any explanation because his gospel was written to Jews who already understood the Pharisees Sabbath regulations.⁴ To understand the conflict we have to understand two things; first, the meaning of Sabbath in the OT and second, the tradition of Sabbath invented by the Pharisees. Jesus and His disciples were not violating the Sabbath, they were violating the Pharisees tradition of the Sabbath.

First, what is the meaning of the Sabbath in the OT? In the beginning the idea of Sabbath was based on God's creation work where He rested from His work which He had done and sanctified that day.⁵ Under the Law it was a day of rest from one's normal work in order to worship and serve God. However, since God had created life during the six days then any threat to life on the seventh day took precedence over keeping Sabbath. Further, since the priests work in the tabernacle/Temple was in worship and service to God then their work also took precedence over Sabbath. Thus there was a harmony in how the OT viewed Sabbath and its relationship to life, rest and the worship of God.

Second, what is the tradition of Sabbath invented by the Pharisees? This is what Jesus and His disciples were violating. Their traditions. Every tradition we will cite tonight is the basis for the accusations made against Jesus and His disciples. What we find is that their traditions of Sabbath distorted the basic understanding of the OT Sabbath and its relationship to life, rest and the worship of God.

We read in Matt 12:1 the expression, **At that time**. The expression marks a change of subject, just as we read in Matt 11:25. The subject then was inviting believing Jews to separate from the Pharisees and learn from Him. The new subject is the growing conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus that now comes out in the open. **At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."** What exactly had they done? It was in keeping with the Law for a hungry man to pick grain along a pathway to satisfy his hunger. However, the Pharisees held that it was not valid to do so on a **Sabbath**. In particular, Alfred Edersheim, a Jew who was raised in a rabbinic home in the 1800's but later became a Messianic Jew, says, "On any ordinary day this would have been lawful but on the Sabbath it involved, according to Rabbinic statutes, at least two sins. For, according to the Talmud, what was really one labour, would, if made up of several acts, each of them forbidden, amount to several acts of labour, each involving sin, punishment, and a sin-offering.... in this case there were at least two such acts involved: that of plucking the ears of corn, ranged under the sin of reaping, and that of rubbing them, which might be ranged under sifting in a sieve, threshing, sifting out fruit, grinding, or fanning.... Holding views like these, the Pharisees, who witnessed the conduct of the disciples, would naturally harshly condemn, what they must have regarded as gross desecration of the Sabbath. Yet it was clearly not a breach of the Biblical, but of the Rabbinic Law."⁶

Jesus now sets out to defend His disciples picking and eating of the grain on Sabbath. To do so He appeals exclusively to the OT Scripture. In verse 3 we note that He asks, "Have you not read...", in verse 5 He asks, "have

you not read in the Law..." and in verse 7 He says "but if you had known what this means..." They are all references to OT Scripture and they are all rebukes. Their traditions of Sabbath had distorted the OT view of Sabbath and its relationship to life, rest and the worship of God. Jesus' defense of His disciples is the most thorough and total refutation I have ever seen in argument. In verses 3-8 Jesus makes four arguments, each combining and interwoven with the others in a masterful defense. All four arguments are arguments of priority. Jesus is showing how four things take priority over keeping Sabbath; namely preservation of physical life, priestly worship, mercy and Himself.

First, Jesus argued that preserving physical life takes priority over keeping ceremonial rituals. He asks in 12:3, **Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?** Turn to the text that records this event in 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Significantly this is the period when David was the rightful heir to the throne but was rejected by the majority of Israel so that Saul was still on the throne and seeking David's life.⁷ By parallel Jesus was also the rightful heir to the throne but was rejected by the majority of Israel and so Satan was still on the throne seeking through the Pharisees Jesus' life. The picture in both cases is of resistance to the rightful king. It was in the situation that **David** was being resisted and only a small band had adhered to Him that he and **his companions...became hungry**. We read in 1 Sam 21:1, "Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest;" Apparently at this time the tabernacle was at a place called Nob, about one and a half miles northeast of Jerusalem. "and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?" Apparently Ahimelech knew that David was Saul's general at the time and so usually traveled with escorting soldiers. His appearance alone might have communicated to Ahimelech that Saul had sent David to assassinate him. In verse 2 "David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.'" David announces that the reason he is alone is because he is on a secret mission. It is often pointed out that David lied since King Saul had not sent him on this mission. However, David may have been referring to King YHWH as the One who sent him. Constable comments that it is either a lie at worst or it is a deception. Commentators go both ways. Nevertheless, having stated he is on a secret mission for the k(K)ing, in verse 3 David says, "Now therefore, what do you have on hand?" He and his men were hungry, they were being sought after by Saul. David says, "Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found." ⁴The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread;" The consecrated bread was the showbread. On each Sabbath the priests would set out twelve fresh loaves of bread in two rows, six to a row, each standing for one of the twelve tribes of Israel, on a pure gold table in the Holy Place. The bread was to be replaced on the next Sabbath and the old bread consumed by the priests in the Holy Place. This was the law. Only the priests were to eat the bread. However, we note that the priest is open to giving the showbread to David, "if only the young men have kept themselves from women." It was a matter of ritual purity

that man not have lain with a woman for twenty-four hours. In verse 5, "David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels *be holy*?" His point is that they had been on the run from Saul and so had not been with women. Thus, verse 6, "...the priest gave him consecrated *bread*; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread *in its place* when it was taken away." So this priest recognized that physical life takes priority over keeping the law relating to the eating of the showbread only by the priests. OT scholar Eugene Merrill states with precision, "There was no ordinary bread, the priest replied (v. 4), but only the holy showbread (Ex. 25:30, KJV) which had been desacralized by being replaced with fresh bread (1 Sam. 21:6; cf. Lev. 24:5–9). This could be eaten, as Jesus suggested later on (Matt. 12:3–4), but ordinarily only by the priests and certainly only by those who were ceremonially pure (1 Sam. 21:4–5; Lev. 15:18). David's eating illustrated a concession that the Law permitted—life is more holy than bread (Matt. 12:7–8)."⁸ Shepard agrees saying, "This was the principle of Necessity. It was perhaps the Sabbath when David committed the double offense of entering...the house of God, and ate the shew-bread consecrated for priests only.... Jesus wisely made use of this example"⁹ which had justification from Lev 18:5 which showed that preservation of physical life, even on Sabbath, superseded ceremonial ritual. Toussaint agrees saying, "By recounting this incident Jesus showed the Pharisees that man's needs supersede the law of the Sabbath."¹⁰ Jesus' statement in Mark 2:27 about Sabbath also agrees, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Clearly the Scriptures place a higher value on physical life than on keeping Sabbath and the example of the priest at Nob illustrates that concessions were made in order to protect physical life. Had the Pharisees not read this?

The example shows how important it is to see priority of commandments in the NT. Take for example the command of Eph 4:25 to "lay aside falsehood," in other words, don't lie. However, what if human life is endangered unless we do lie? The greater importance of human life necessitates that we lie in order to fulfill the higher commandment. Constable says, "We acknowledge the same priority today. Suppose you pass a house that is on fire. You stop, run up to the front door, bang on the door, and ring the doorbell. You look in the window and see someone lying on the floor. You then kick in the door and drag the unconscious person outside to safety. Even though breaking into someone else's house is a criminal offense, the law will not prosecute you since you saved that person's life."¹¹ This must be recognized and we must think through priorities of commandments given to us by God or else we will become like Pharisees in our denunciation of everyone for everything.

Returning to the situation at hand, there's more. Jesus' disciples were hungry. He validates their right to eat on the Sabbath based on David and his companions eating the showbread when they were hungry. J. Vernon McGee asks, "Why were they hungry?" His answer "Because they were following Jesus." The question then becomes what was so difficult about following Jesus? Earlier in Matt 8:20 Jesus had said "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have roosting branches; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." This statement laid down the difficulty associated with becoming a true disciple. It meant that following Jesus was not going to

be a walk in the park, it was going to be a demanding walk throughout all Israel taking the gospel of the kingdom; oftentimes without a place to rest one's head or meals to eat. They had constantly been on the move and that is why they had become hungry.

But what difference does it make? Who is Jesus or what is so great about Him that justifies their picking and eating on Sabbath? Jesus was greater than the Sabbath. Jesus was greater than the Temple. Jesus was the King of Israel and the God of the Universe. All things had been handed over to Him by the Father. His disciples were therefore right to be constantly in service and worship of Him. Edersheim rightly says, "The disciples, when following the Lord, were...in the service of the Lord; ministering to Him was more than ministering in the Temple, for He was greater than the Temple. If the Pharisees had believed this, they would not have questioned their conduct, nor in so doing have themselves infringed that higher Law which enjoined mercy, not sacrifice."¹² They were hungry because they were in service to the King. This was worship. The Sabbath was set aside not only for rest but also for worship. Anything that was necessary to sustain worship of the King was permitted. In this case food.

Toussaint draws an interesting implication when he notes the parallel situation that David and Jesus found themselves in. He draws this implication in connection with a quote from A. C Gaebelein, "David, God's anointed king, in rejection was forced to eat that which it was not lawful to eat. However, he was held guiltless because as long as "...David was rejected and a fugitive, the holy things connected with the ceremonies given to Israel by God ceased to be holy." In other words, by parallel, it's possible that because Jesus was God's anointed king, but in rejection, that everything going on at the Temple in the NT was categorically unholy. Jesus was where true worship was to be directed. He was greater than the Temple. Any worship being done at the Temple would have to be false worship. Jesus' disciples seem to have grasped that. The Pharisees did not!

So Jesus' first argument actually involves several elements and these sort of blend in with His other arguments in order to exert their true force. Essentially, preservation of human life takes priority over Sabbath, the priority is justified because they are worshipping the one true King and finally when the King is present He as the object of worship takes precedence over the Law and the Temple. In reality, the Pharisees, by condemning Jesus' disciples were condemning themselves because they should have been worshipping and following Him.

Second, Jesus argues that the priests worship took priority over the Sabbath since they were not guilty for sacrificing on the Sabbath. In 12:5 He asks, **Or have you not read in the Law?** Were they ignorant of what had been written? Of what **the Law** said? These are stinging rebukes for those who had Ivy League educations in **the Law**. Had they **not read** the document central to their education? The part that says **on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?** Turn to the text that records this provision in Numbers 28:9, 10, 18 and 19. It was the law that they sacrifice on Sabbath. After discussing the burnt offering and the drink offering He says in verse 9, "Then on the sabbath day two male lambs one year old without defect, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and its drink offering; 10This is the burnt

offering of every sabbath in addition to the continual burnt offering and drink offering." The Law is pretty clear that the priests were to offer sacrifices on Sabbath. This offering of sacrifices was work. It broke the sabbath rest. But if you recall the Sabbath was not only for rest, it was also for worship. Edersheim correctly states, "The Sabbath-Law was not one merely of rest, but of rest for worship. The Service of the Lord was the object in view. The priests worked on the Sabbath, because this service was the object of the Sabbath."¹³ The work of the temple on the sabbath took priority over rest since the purpose of the rest was for worship.

But how then was what the disciples were doing considered worship? Very easily we see as Jesus says in verse 6, **But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.** They were worshipping Him. It makes sense that if the worship of the priests in the Temple superseded Sabbath rules, how much more does the worship of the Messiah override the Sabbath? In other words, if the priests had been justified in their worship in the Temple on Sabbath then the disciples were even more justified in their worship of Him who was far greater than the Temple on Sabbath. Shepard says, "How much more should His disciples be justified now in His service who was greater than the Temple. He had cleansed the Temple a few months ago. Work necessary for the service and worship of God was justifiable. This was the principle to which Jesus appealed and in so doing incidentally made a claim for Himself of superiority to the Temple and therefore to the Sabbath, since the Temple service superseded the Sabbath."¹⁴ The one much greater than the Temple was present and as such worship was to be directed toward Him.

Third, Jesus argues that mercy takes priority over strictly keeping rules. In 12:7 He chides, **But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent.** Not only had they manifested that they had not read the Scriptures but that they did not know the meaning of the Scriptures. Turn to the Scripture quoted in Hos 6:6. Hosea is the prophet who was told to go marry a harlot to illustrate to Israel that God had to be married to a harlot nation. The nation referred to in verse 4 as Ephraim is a reference to the northern kingdom because the dominant tribe in the northern kingdom was Ephraim. Judah refers to the southern kingdom. He asks, "What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud And like the dew which goes away early." The word "loyalty" is *chesed* and refers to their loyalty to the Mosaic covenant. Their loyalty was about as substantive as a vapor. Verse 5, "Therefore I have hewn *them* in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth;" The prophets were the mouthpiece of God and as such His prosecuting attorneys, "And the judgments on you are *like* the light that goes forth. ⁶For I delight in loyalty" speaking of loyalty to the Mosaic covenant, "rather than sacrifice," And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. ⁷But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me. ⁸Gilead is a city of wrongdoers, Tracked with bloody *footprints.*" The idea in verse 6 is that they had not been loyal to the Mosaic covenant is in the sense of keeping the spirit of the covenant. The Jews in Hosea's day offered sacrifice but it was all just religious ritual. In practice they did the letter of the covenant but not the spirit of the covenant. When Jesus quoted Hos 6:6 he replaced "loyalty" with "compassion" or "mercy" because that was the true spirit of the covenant. The covenant was not

about observing a strict set of rules. It was about showing mercy and compassion to fellow man in need. Shepard says, "Again He chides them for their lack of spiritual understanding of the Scriptures, if they had properly interpreted the words of Hosea (6:6) they would not have condemned His innocent disciples. God desires kindness and good will in men rather than punctilious observance of traditional rules."¹⁵ The Pharisees were obviously arrogant and spiritually dull. They did not show that they had an understanding of the Scriptures in practical experience. Walvoord says, "The problem was not what the disciples had done but the merciless hearts of the Pharisees."¹⁶ This is one among many passages that leads me to wince in horror when I see Christians not showing mercy toward other Christians. They claim to know the word but their practical experience shows little manifestation of it. They show rigor for strict observance of doctrine and rules but little if any mercy. Such is not the composition of Christianity! James warns those who claim to have such great doctrine without application saying, "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy! Mercy triumphs over judgment" (Jas 2:13). As Christians if we miss the preeminence of mercy we miss the spirit of the God who first showed mercy to us? And how sad it will be at the judgment seat of Christ.

Fourth, Jesus argues that He Himself takes priority over the Sabbath. In 12:8 he says, **For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath**. This means He has authority over the Sabbath to get rid of it or change it as He sees fit! He gave the Sabbath and He can just as easily take it away. He is the authority. He gave the Sabbath for man to find rest and worship of the one true God. Since He is the one true God then man should find their rest and worship in Him! The fact that He did not condemn His disciples for finding their rest and worship in Him and the Pharisees did condemn them is very telling. His true identity was already being hidden from them. If they had only come to Him and learned from Him they would not have condemned His disciples but joined them in finding their rest and worship in Him.

The title **Son of Man**¹⁷ is significant. Jesus uses it of Himself more than any other title. It stems from Dan 7:13 and has been used previously in Matt 8:20 and 9:6. It is variously interpreted but the best view is that it refers to the union of God and man in the One who was the King of Israel.¹⁸ Jesus is saying that He as the King of Israel is Lord of the Sabbath. If the Pharisees had only received Him as their King the kingdom would have come and with it a 1,000 year sabbath rest for all of creation!

In conclusion, Matt 12 begins with the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees coming out in the open. In 12:1, Jesus and His disciples were walking through a grainfield on the Sabbath and His disciples became hungry because they had been intensely following Him. In 12:2, the moment they began to pick the heads of grain and eat the Pharisees condemned them for breaking the Sabbath. Jesus immediately defended them with four powerfully interwoven arguments. First, in 12:3, had they not read what David, the king in waiting, had done when he became hungry with his small group of followers? In 12:4 he entered the tabernacle at Nob and they ate the showbread that was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him but for the priests alone? The example shows that the preservation of physical life takes priority over ceremonial procedures and that when

the king in waiting is present nothing is holy and so those once holy things are validly consumed by those who follow the king. Second, in 12:5, had they not read in the Law the part where it says that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? It was clearly permissible in the Law because they were involved in worship. If that were so and 12:6 He proclaims that He Himself is greater than the temple then clearly worship of Him was permitted on the Sabbath. Why weren't they worshipping Him? The example shows that true worship of the King takes priority over petty Sabbath procedures. If they needed food to continue following Him in true worship that was fine. Third, in 12:7, if they had known what this means, I desire compassion, and not sacrifice, they would not have condemned the innocent disciples. Their condemnation of them evidenced that they did not understand the heart intent of the law which was mercy and compassion. They were too involved in strict observance of petty religious scruples and hence failed to manifest the true intent of the law. The example shows that mercy takes priority over religious scruples and nice tight regulations. Fourth, in 12:8, He was the God-man King of Israel and as such the Lord of the Sabbath. How dare they accuse those whom He as Lord of the Sabbath did not accuse? They were busy worshipping the one true God while they were playing religious games.

What application can we make? First, we need to be careful in our study of Scripture to stay with the Scripture alone. The Scriptures are a harmony and place weight on certain elements over others. When the Pharisees added all kinds of stipulations it necessarily caused them to neglect the weightier things found in Scripture alone. What the weightier things are and how the whole is a harmony is discovered only by careful thought and study through what is central and emphasized in Scripture. I cannot overemphasize the importance of putting due weight on what is really important and letting the other pieces fall into place. The hermeneutical principle is that the less clear passages must give way to the clearer passages. That has and always will be the proper approach. Otherwise, what happens is you begin to veer off into strange doctrines. Second, we need to focus on being merciful to others. Often Christians in our circles are so concerned with every little thing that they divide and cut up the body of Christ and never do you see the element of being merciful to others. I am sick and tired of this because I think we have the true theology, dispensationalism. And if we get all upset about some little thing over here we can't move forward and develop our system by exegesis. It just distracts and distorts. And for those who show little or no mercy you really need to re-think what it is you're doing because it's not good. Third, our true act of service is offering ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, not following petty little religious observances that someone expects of us. That is Rom 12:1-2 and that is what these disciples were doing and they were defended by Christ for it while being condemned by others for it. In the disposition of offering ourselves to Him we are at liberty to partake of anything needful or helpful in serving Him more effectively.

In conclusion I quote Edersheim who shed so much background light from Judaism on this passage. He says, "In truth, the reason why David was blameless in eating the shewbread was the same as that which made the Sabbath-labour of the priests lawful. The Sabbath-Law was not one merely of rest, but of rest for worship. The Service of the Lord was the object in view. 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. If the Pharisees had believed this, they would not have questioned their conduct, nor in so doing have themselves infringed that higher Law which enjoined mercy, not sacrifice."¹⁹ It could not be better said in my estimation.

By way of application he says, "But to us the words mean more than this. They preach not only that the Service of Christ is that of God, but that, even more than in the Temple, all of work or of liberty is lawful which this service requires. We are free while we are doing anything for Christ; God loves mercy, and demands not sacrifice;" our "sacrifice is the service of Christ, in heart, and life, and work. We are not free to do anything we please; but we are free to do anything needful or helpful, while we are doing any service to Christ."²⁰ This is the offering up of ourselves as a living sacrifice. It's Romans 12:1-2 in a nutshell.

Quite simply it was a Mary and Martha issue. Stop cleaning the dishes and bow at the Master's feet! As long as the Messiah is with you worship Him. What else is there? Jesus is the greatest.

¹ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 158.

² John F. Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 86.

³ Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*, p 259.

⁴ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 158.

⁵ The Sabbath was originally the seventh day of creation when God rested from all His work which He had done (Gen 2:2-3). On that day God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which He had created and made. The Sabbath was later enforced after the nation came out of Egypt when God gave manna six days of the week but not on the seventh (Exod 16:23ff). God said "Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none." Then in the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt Sinai the fourth commandment is that of remembering the Sabbath. The commandment is based on creation week. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." They were to rest in order to worship.

⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 56.

⁷ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 158.

⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, "1 Samuel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 450–451.

⁹ Cited by Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 165.

¹⁰ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 158.

¹¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 1 Sa 21:1.

¹² Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 58.

¹³ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 58.

¹⁴ Shepard cited by Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 166.

¹⁵ Shepard cited by Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p 166.

¹⁶ John Walvoord, *Thy Kingdom Come*, p 87.

¹⁷ The title derives from Dan 7:13 where one like a Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and receives an eternal kingdom. The fact He is the Son of Man definitely connects Him to humanity but the expression "like a Son of Man" signifies he is also distinct from humanity. Renald Showers is correct in saying, "Daniel was seeing a person who was deity incarnated in human form." Toussaint is correct to conclude that "the term refers to the union of God and man in the One who was to be the King of Israel."

¹⁸ Stanley Toussaint, *Behold the King*, p 126.

¹⁹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 58.

²⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 58–59.