

The Son of Man is Lord

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Matthew 12:1-14

The thesis of the Gospel of Matthew is to show Jesus as the rightful, legal heir to the throne of David. Throughout the book, Jesus acts not merely as a teacher but as King exercising authority, issuing commands, and advancing His kingdom.

The Sabbath – a complete day of rest from secular work following six days of labor. Established and modeled by God in Genesis. In our Western world and particularly in a non-Jewish mindset, the Sabbath can seem rather archaic. However, we will see it in its full value mentally, emotionally, and physically.

I. The Provision Challenged (Matthew 12:1-2)

A. The Scene (12:1)

1. The Lord's walk.
2. The disciples' hunger.
3. The corn harvested.
 - a) This action by the disciples was customary and lawful. **Deuteronomy 23:25**, *If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.*

B. The Challenge (12:2)

1. Were the Pharisees demanding behavior of others that they did not require of themselves? Hypocrisy (**Matthew 23:1-4**) (Strict adherence to the law while ignoring the royal law of love; **James 2:8-9**)
2. Were the disciples ignoring the law and engaging in behavior that was forbidden? Were the disciples engaging in mere self-indulgence? License (Do we commit sin willingly knowing grace covers it? **Romans 5:20-6:2**, esp. **6:1**) (Note: the boundaries of License & Hypocrisy)

II. The Precedents Explained (Matthew 12:3-8)

A. The Two Precedents (Matthew 12:3-5)

1. An exception of necessity and support of life: David and the Temple shewbread (**3-4**; **1 Samuel 21:6**, **Leviticus 24:5-9**). This was not an act of pride (see **2 Chronicles 26:16**, Uzziah), but of human need (hunger). **Proverbs 6:30**, *People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry*,
2. An exception of service of the day: Priest's daily ministry on the Sabbath (**5**)
 - a) Priests did "work" on the Sabbath.
 - b) This work included killing, flaying, burning of sacrifices which if in common usage would have been a violation of Sabbath law.

B. The Three Arguments (Matthew 12:6)

1. There is One greater than the Temple (12:6)
 - a) Accusation against Stephen, (**Acts 6:13**, *"This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law."*)
2. God will have mercy and not sacrifice (12:7)
 - a) Quote from **Hosea 6:6**, *For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*
 - b) **Matthew 9:13**, *Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*
 - (1) Knowledge of Scripture never replaces living the Scripture.
 - (2) *"God is not pleased with ceremonies when the heart is estranged from Him."* (Spurgeon)
3. Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day (12:8) The Sabbath is not supreme over the Lord.

III. The Purpose Revealed (Matthew 12:9-14)

- A. The trap is set. (**Matthew 12:9-10**) (The question was not for instruction but accusation)
- B. The question mirrored (**Matthew 12:11-12**). (Argument from the lesser to the greater)
 1. Anger at the hardness of heart (**Mark 6:5**)
 2. The choice to be made is binary (**Mark 3:4**, good vs. harm & **Luke 6:9**, save vs. destroy life)
- C. The healing and the fury (**Matthew 12:13-14**)

IV. Light for our Path

- A. Dan Sullivan, author of *Who not How*, “*Free Days are not rewards for working hard. They're a necessity for high performance.*” Sullivan requires his coaching clients to take complete "Free Days"—no work, no email, no business thinking—because he's discovered that strategic rest precedes breakthrough thinking. He writes: **"Entrepreneurs think that their job is to work harder. Actually, their job is to think better. And you can't think better when you're exhausted."**
- B. This is precisely Jesus' point about Sabbath. It wasn't designed as a restriction but as fuel for what matters most.
- C. The Pharisees had created a Sabbath system where people served the rules. Jesus reverses it: the Sabbath serves people by serving their need for worship, rest, and renewal. Modern productivity experts are rediscovering what Jesus taught—rest isn't the opposite of productivity; it's the foundation for sustainable, creative, excellent work.
- D. Jesus was right two thousand years before business research proved it. Rest isn't laziness—it's obedience to God's design and strategic wisdom for life. The Sabbath principle doesn't hinder human flourishing; it enables it. The Pharisees turned gift into burden. We often do the same, either by making rest another legalistic obligation or by eliminating it entirely in the name of productivity. Both errors miss God's purpose.