

The Character of Jesus 15
Plucking Grain on the Sabbath
Matthew 12:1 – 8, Mark 2:23 – 28, Luke 6:1 – 5

- Characteristic: Consistency
 - (1) Gleaning was addressed in the Law (Deuteronomy 23:24 – 25)
 - (2) Why were the Pharisees even present? Apparently, a sizeable entourage tagged along as Jesus travelled. Some Pharisees were in the group, perhaps sent by the party leaders to gather evidence of teaching against the Law.
 - (3 – 4) David and friends were given the showbread, which was reserved for priests.
 - (1 Samuel 21:1 – 6) David assured the High Priest that the men were “clean,” and that they were on a godly mission, so the bread is not being misused.
 - (Leviticus 24:5 – 9) Some say the bread was baked on the Sabbath, but it could have been Friday afternoon and placed, still hot, on the Table of Showbread after sundown. Only the High Priest’s family was to eat this bread.
 - This is not the setting aside of rules due to a “higher purpose,” but rather meeting a need while still respecting the rule. One extreme condition did not cause the rule to become obsolete. Rules were not to be suspended lightly.
 - Jesus brought this up because God expressed no displeasure with either the High Priest or David, even though David was a little deceptive.
 - (5) The priests performed physical labor in the jobs on the Sabbath.
 - (Numbers 28:9 – 10) In addition to the daily sacrifices (28:3 – 8), extra sacrifices were added on the Sabbath. Each had to be butchered, prepared, and offered.
 - Jesus argued for consistency (perfection in the KJV). If all labor is banned on the Sabbath, then the Law is inconsistent to require the priests to have their biggest day on the Sabbath.
 - (6) What would those present have thought about “greater than the Temple”?
 - Jesus was not claiming to be God or the Messiah, or His words here would be confusing because they did not have sufficient proof yet.
 - Jesus was aiming at a truth that those present could understand. The Temple is symbolism. People are the reality of the illustration. No one was defaming the practices of the Law, but rather they were on an obviously holy quest. Those present understood that Jesus was “from God.” They just weren’t sure how all this fit together. This violation of the teachings of the rabbis should cause them to question the rabbis, not accuse one obviously from God.
 - (7) I desire mercy and not sacrifice.
 - (Hosea 6:6) Mercy: compassion plus the compulsion to fix the problem. Hosea’s next line is “And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” The point was that the character traits God desires produce sacrifice. Sacrifice without character is worthless.
 - (Psalm 51:16 – 17) David made the same point centuries earlier.
 - Jesus point was that the Pharisees needed to find a consistent answer to their dilemma.
 - (8) The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath

- This “son of man” is all people, not the Messiah. Ezekiel called himself by this name repeatedly.
 - Many have taught that Jesus was saying that He had the authority to supersede the Law, which would contradict Matthew 5:17.
 - Mark 2:27 includes, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”
 - The Sabbath was to be a benefit, not a chore. Understanding the Sabbath hinged on being consistent with this principle.
- Applications
 - Being blatantly Christian will develop an entourage which will include those who want to find fault.
 - Be prepared with rebuttals based on consistency.
 - Expand the question to the context and our basic assumptions about God.
 - Do we have practices that limit the lesson we are to learn?
 - Assembly seating versus comforting and connecting and unity.
 - Limiting worship to one or a few hours per week.
 - Do we focus on the practice or the character that produces the practice?
 - Build character and bad choices fade away.
 - Developing connection makes division much more difficult.
 - Lord’s Supper and baptism.
 - Do we refine the definitions of our practices so that the result is more man than God?
 - “The Authority of the Scriptures”
 - “Command, Example, and Necessary Inference”