

**2. When the Pharisees saw it.** Probably these Pharisees were those who had been sent down from Jerusalem to measure the influence of the new Teacher, and report. They were not friendly observers. Jesus did things that shocked them. He assumed to forgive sins; he ate and drank with publicans and sinners; from their point of view he taught men to dishonor the Sabbath. No wonder they were alert with their criticism. **Thy disciples.** Every rabbi had his followers who exemplified his teachings; so that the criticism on a rabbi's disciples was really a criticism on himself. **That which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.** The "law" here referred to is not to be found in the "Mosaic" books. It had its origin among the Pharisees themselves. So intent were they to avoid transgression of the Mosaic law that they made many minute and troublesome regulations clear over the edge of Moses's commands, and held that it was as wicked to disregard these man-made regulations as to break God's law. This led our Lord on another occasion to charge them with "making void the law." The plucking of even one ear of corn, they said, was reaping; to rub it with the hands was to thresh; to catch a flea was to hunt; even to eat a fresh egg on the day after the Sabbath was a doubtful act, because the hen might have laid it on the holy day. Such quibbling shows an utter lack of understanding of the loving purpose of God's law. Notice, however, that there was no objection made to the plucking of the ears; only to its being done on the Sabbath. According to our modern laws, which are Roman (pagan) in their origin, it might be counted an intrusion, even robbery, for a person to help himself to the product of another's field, but the Mosaic law made special provision for the wayfarer. Deut. 23, 24.

**3. Have ye not read what David did?** The story is told in 1 Sam. 21, 1-7, which, according to Dr. Farrar's brilliant conjecture, for which he gives some reasons, had been read in the synagogue as the appointed Scripture that very morning. Jesus did not need any indorsement from David, but he used the Pharisees' weapons against themselves; they were worshipers of the letter of the law, and he shows them that the ideal Hebrew of earlier times on a pivotal occasion of his life broke one of the directest laws outright. He knew the Pharisees dared not indorse this act of David's, and they dared not criticize it. But if not, then why should they criticize the disciples of Jesus, whose act was not directly illegal?

**4. The house of God.** Which was the tabernacle at Nob. Mark (2, 26) mentions Abiathar as the name of the high priest; the record in Samuel calls him Abimelech. **The showbread.**

It consisted of twelve cakes or loaves, which were placed in two piles on a golden table every Sabbath, and on each pile (or else between the two) was laid a golden cup of frankincense. These stood forth perpetually in the presence of the Lord, as one of the most sacred and beautiful emblems of the ancient worship. "It was," says Dr. Morison, "a significant and sublime symbolism, denoting that Jehovah was the provider of his people's food." Every week when the new bread was put upon the table the old cakes were removed, and the law forbade any to eat of these but the priests. By thus instancing David's breach of Moses's law our Lord would teach that when God's commands seem to come into collision with the real needs of mankind, as they must on rare occasions in a world of infirmities, it is men's needs that have the right of way; for God's commands exist on account of those needs. The Jewish sailor who, to the peril of many, refused to touch the helm on the Sabbath, when a wild storm was raging, was a badly mistaken hero, if not, rather, an unconscious criminal. God does not need showbread to eat; God does not need a Sabbath to rest; God does not need the money given to the Church; but men need to rest, and men need to give. Every law, like the law of the Sabbath, was made for man.

**5. Have ye not read in the law? See Num. 28, 9. The priests in the temple profane the sabbath.** By doing work within the temple which on general principles had been forbidden; for instance, they removed the showbread, they lighted the fires, and even slew the victims of sacrifice. The Sabbath was their busiest day. But who would blame them? They served Jehovah.

**6. But I say unto you.** This phrase, which Jesus repeatedly used, must have jarred harshly on the Pharisees' ears; for they were forever quoting precedent and authority; what some dead rabbi had said was of far more importance to them than any fresh thought. **In this place is one greater than the temple.** Very naturally is this phrase referred to our Lord himself. Our bodies are temples for the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6, 19), and surely the Son of man in his own physical person was a perfect temple of God. But our Lord meant more than merely that he himself was greater than the temple; more even than that the human body of a believing Christian is a better temple than any that can be built of marble and gold. The deeper meaning of his statement is that the principle he now declares is a greater principle than that for which the temple stood. For the better translation is, "Here is something greater than