

Connect360: The Lord's Day

January 19, 2021

- *Lesson 9 in the BaptistWay Press Connect 360 unit "The reMARKable Journey Begins" focuses on Mark 2:23-28.*

As in so many other occasions in the Bible, Jesus answered a question with a question. Jesus alluded to an Old Testament precedent for his disciples' actions. "Have you never read...?" the story from 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Jesus asked the most religious people of his day. There is no denying the great tension between a rabbi from Nazareth and the graduates from the most prestigious religious schools of the day taking place in this encounter.

Jesus reminded the Pharisees of an Old Testament example for his disciples' actions. During the days when David and his cohorts were on the run from King Saul, they arrived at Ahimelech the priest's home asking for food. The only bread available was the "consecrated bread," and David and his companions ate this bread. Jesus argued that if the law regarding consecrated bread could be broken for David who was running for his life, how much more can the Sabbath laws be broken for Jesus' disciples?

Mark's reference to Abiathar being the high priest causes some historical questions for the biblical student. According to the account in 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Ahimelech, Abiathar's father, was the high priest at the time. However, in other areas of the Old Testament, the order is reversed. In 2 Samuel 8:17 and 1 Chronicles 18:16; 24:6, Ahimelech's father is Abiathar. There is a second reason for translating the verse as the NAS does, "in the time of Abiathar." Mark may have used this phrase to refer to an entire narrative of the Old Testament. Mark did this in other areas of his Gospel (Mark 12:26) when referring to the entire account of Moses and the burning bush. As Mark Straus writes, "First Samuel 21-22 could be called the account of Abiathar the high priest since it is he who escaped Saul's

murder of the priests of Nob and took refuge with David.” (Mark L. Strauss, *Mark: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*)

Letter of the law, spirit of the law

Jesus never denied breaking the law, but pointed out that on certain occasions, there is a difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. Doing acts that bring and provide life always are within the limits of the law, even on the Sabbath. Human need always supplants any ritual observance. There also was something deeper taking place in this exchange. Jesus was referring to himself in the same vain as King David. If King David (the greatest king in Israel’s history) had the authority to set aside the traditional law to feed his men when they are hungry, how much more authority does Jesus, the King of Kings have? As we will discover in the next two verses, this is a story not only of eating some grain on the Sabbath, this is a story of Jesus making the claim that he is the Messiah.

The Sabbath day is a gift, because it allows God’s people to remember that this world once held us in slavery. Our lives once were driven by the expectations of different gods of the 21st century—work, materialism, the quest for pleasure, or pleasing the expectations of others. God tells his people to take a day and remember what God has saved you from, because if you do not, you will be tempted to enter the same slavery again.

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