

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 5

Mark 2:18 – 3:6

Review

- Baptism and Temptation (Mark 1:1-13)
- Year long ministry in Judea (John 1:19-4:45)
 - First Miracle in Cana – Water to wine; Cleansing of Temple; Encounter with Nicodemus; Woman at the well in Samaria
- Galilean Ministry (1:14-7:23)
 - Summary of Jesus Teaching
 - Calling the first disciples as fishermen
 - Healing a demoniac in Capernaum
 - Healing Simon's mother-in-law
 - Healing many people
 - Preaching tour through Galilee
 - Healing a Leper during the preaching tour
 - Healing a Paralytic
 - The Calling of Matthew

Controversy Over Fasting and Parables of Cloth and Wineskin (2:18-23)

¹⁸John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came* and said* to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁹And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰"But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

²¹"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results. ²²"No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins *as well*; but *one puts* new wine into fresh wineskins."

- Fasting, denying oneself sustenance for a time, should be done as a result of deep concern, mourning, and sorrow over some spiritual need. It is an act of discipline that allows the believer to focus the mind on the Lord. It should be done privately in humility (Matt 6:16-18).
- In the Old Testament only the annual Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur (Lev. 16:29) was specified as a fast.
- It is not necessary to lump John's disciples into the same category as the Pharisees in observing fasts. John was "...preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." The "Great Fast" on the Day of Atonement was associated with repentance so it seems natural that John and his disciples would "often fast" (Luke 5:33)
- The Pharisees on the other hand promoted voluntary fasts twice a week (cf. Luke 18:12) in an outward display of supposed godliness. In fact, since it was done to be seen by men from hearts not devoted to God "they had their reward in full" (Matt 6:16).
- Jesus then responds in a parable emphasizing the joy of being with the Great Physician. It is impossible for the disciples to be sorrowful, and thus fast, while Jesus was with them, but one day He would be taken away and they would be filled with sorrow.
- Jesus follows up His teaching on fasting with two parables illustrating the difference between Jesus' relationship-religion and the Pharisee's external-religion. The two are not compatible.

- If an unshrunk patch is placed on a shrunken garment, the patch will shrink – the garment will not shrink causing a worse tear than the first. The two are not compatible.
- In the same way, Jesus' new and internal gospel of forgiveness and cleansing cannot be attached to the old and external traditions of self-righteousness and ritual. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15
- Old wineskins have already been stretched due to the expanding, fermenting wine and have become brittle. When new wine is placed in old wineskins the wineskins will burst due to the expanding wine. The two are not compatible.
- Jesus' new teaching of an inward change that comes about by repentance from dead works and faith in Him is not compatible with the Pharisaic supposed God-pleasing external traditions.
- ... the only life that can contain true righteousness is the new life given by God when a person repents of his sin and trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15

Controversy Over Sabbath Work (2:23-28)

²³And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads *of grain*. ²⁴The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵And He said* to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; ²⁶how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar *the high priest*, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for *anyone* to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?" ²⁷Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸"So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

- The specific time and place of this event is not provided by Mark.
- According to Pharisaic tradition, there were 39 acts forbidden on the Sabbath. One of them was reaping probably extracted from Ex 34:21.

²¹"You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; *even* during plowing time and harvest you shall rest. Ex. 34:21
- What Jesus and His disciples were doing was allowed in the Mosaic Law.

²⁵"When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain. Deut. 23:25
- Jesus instructs the Pharisees from 1 Sam 21:1-6. He sarcastically asks them if they had read the account which they certainly had but without understanding what it had taught.
- The bread of the Presence was baked weekly, and each Sabbath twelve fresh loaves (representing the twelve tribes) replaced the previous ones, which could be eaten only by the priests. On that particular occasion, however, an exception was made on behalf of David and his men, who were weak from hunger. God was not offended by that act, and He did not discipline either Abimelech or David. The Lord was willing for a ceremonial regulation to be violated when doing so was necessary to meet the needs of His beloved people.

If God makes allowances for His *own* law to be broken under certain circumstances for the welfare of His people, Jesus said, He surely permits purposeless and foolish man-made traditions to be broken for that purpose. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15

- The spirit of the Law in respect to human need took priority over its ceremonial regulations. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament
- God instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest for man (Ex 20:8-11). The Pharisees then twisted it and made it a day of burden.

- Son of Man – Used some 80 times in the Gospels to refer to Jesus.
- This was Jesus’ favorite self-designation. It originated in the Old Testament (Dan 7:13-14), was used during the intertestamental period, and was chosen by Jesus to define His messianic mission. Holman Bible Handbook

¹³ “I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.

¹⁴ “And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.. Dan. 7:13-:14

- However, the Jews did not understand that the Messiah must first suffer.
- Jesus claimed He was greater than the Sabbath, and thus was God. Based on that authority, Jesus could in fact reject the Pharisaic regulations concerning the Sabbath and restore God’s original intention for the Sabbath observance to be a blessing not a burden. MacArthur Study Bible - Page 1463

Controversy Over Sabbath Healing (3:1-6)

¹He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. ²They were watching Him *to see* if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. ³He said* to the man with the withered hand, “**Get up and come forward!**” ⁴And He said* to them, “**Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?**” But they kept silent. ⁵After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said* to the man, “**Stretch out your hand.**” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring with the Herodians against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him.

- This is the last in a five event account of Jesus in conflict with the Jewish religious leaders ending with them seeking to destroy Jesus.
 - Conflict over forgiving the paralytic’s sins
 - Conflict over dining with tax collectors and sinners
 - Conflict over fasting
 - Conflict over picking grain on the Sabbath
 - Conflict over healing on the Sabbath
- Entered again into a synagogue – The specific time and place of this event is again not specified by Mark. Though in or around Capernaum is a likely place.
- Hand was withered – “dried up; wasted away” Luke adds that it was the man’s right hand (Luke 6:6)
- They were watching Him – Luke 6:7 adds that “they” were scribes and Pharisees. Their purpose in the synagogue was not to worship but to spy on Jesus.
- To see if He would heal – The question in the Pharisees’ minds was not “if Jesus *could*” heal, but “if Jesus *would*” heal. The fact that Jesus has proven to them that He is the Messiah doesn’t cross their minds. They are seeking to accuse Him. Rabbinic law allowed healing on the Sabbath only if a life was in danger.

- The Pharisees were consumed with the man-made legal issue of healing on the Sabbath. Jesus confronts them with the moral issue. Clearly it was “lawful” to only do good. The Pharisees kept silent since their position held no merit.
- Anger – The only explicit statement of Jesus being angry though His anger is seen when He clears the temple. This anger is a righteous indignation over sin. An anger at this time when the Pharisees were consumed with hatred instead of compassion.
- Grieved – A continuing feeling of deep sorrow. The Son of God had come to give His life a ransom for many and yet His chosen people rejected their redeemer.
- Hardness of heart – a covering with a callous, figuratively blindness, stubbornness, lack of feeling.
- Once again this healing was 1) immediate, 2) complete, and 3) visible to all.
- The Pharisees went out and immediately *began* conspiring... *as to* how they might destroy Him – Jesus poses a threat to the Pharisees’ religious power. Because they wanted to destroy Jesus so badly, they were willing to join their enemies.
- Herodians – Enemies of the Pharisees. The Herodians were Jews who supported Rome and the Herods in particular.

Summary

- The opposition to Jesus by the ruling classes (Pharisees – religious and Herodians – political) has been growing and now has climaxed with those who hate Jesus plotting to destroy Him.
- Next week we will look at Jesus’ ever growing popularity among the ordinary people. Jesus will select the twelve.