

The Gospel of Mark

Double Sabbath Trouble: Lesson 6

- I. Overview
 - a. Mark 2:1-3:6 is a well-constructed series of controversy stories
 - b. Resistance to Jesus increases from low (2:1-12) to high (3:1-6)
 - c. In the story of Jesus healing the paralytic man (2:1-12), Jesus' opponents only question in their hearts
 - d. In the story of Jesus dining with sinners (2: 15-17), Jesus' opponents ask the disciples about their behavior
 - e. Resistance to Jesus increases from low (2:1-12) to high (3:1-6)
 - i. In the first Shabbat controversy story (2:23-28), Jesus' opponents step up the intensity by questioning Jesus himself
 - ii. In the last story of the section (3:1-6), Jesus' opponents take active initiative to entrap him
 - f. This crescendo has reached its peak
 - i. by the end of this series of stories (3:6), Jesus' opponents plot to destroy him
- II. God's Shabbat
 - a. Genesis 2: 2-3
 - b. Exodus 20: 8-11
 - c. Exodus 35: 1-3
 - d. Numbers 15: 32-36
- III. The Shabbat of Old Testament Judaism
 - a. Punishment for Shabbat violation was death
 - b. Such seriousness requires that much care must be taken in defining work
 - c. Much care must be taken in knowing exactly when Shabbat begins and ends
 - i. Sundown on Friday to nightfall on Saturday
 - d. Talmud - 24 chapters on Shabbat
 - i. A holy ordinance of God
 - ii. Observers became partners with God in creation and salvation
 - e. Mishnah list 39 classes of work
 - f. Defining and protecting Shabbat
 - i. Jewish care and interest are understandable and (to a large extent) commendable
 - ii. "Better safe than sorry. "
 - iii. Construct a fence around the Mosaic law that is more encompassing than the law itself to assure safe compliance with
 - g. Possible abuses caused by intensive efforts to obey the law
 - i. Loss of focus
 1. God's ultimate intention and underlying purpose can be forgotten in pressing after every particular
 - ii. An overly zealous approach can take us beyond God's actual intentions
- IV. Pharisees' Shabbat – rules for ALL occasions
 - a. Work forbidden
 - i. Plowing (moving furniture), hunting, butchering
 - ii. Tying or untying knots, sewing more than one stitch

- iii. Scribes could not carry pens
- iv. Carry nothing heavier than a dried fig
- v. Toss an object and catch with the other hand
- vi. Lighting or extinguishing candles
- vii. Bathing
- viii. Starting fires
- ix. Clearing a collapsed building
- x. Healing the sick
- xi. Walking more than 1,999 steps
- b. Work forbidden (exceptions)
 - i. Priests allowed to start the fires of the altar
 - ii. Clear enough to find victims
 - 1. Living removed, dead left until sundown
 - iii. Healing the sick
 - 1. Allowed to save lives
 - iv. Walking more than 1,999 steps (traveling)
 - 1. Eruv

V. The Situation

- a. Jesus and the disciples were traveling and reaping
- b. What they were doing was acceptable six days a week
 - i. Passing through a field on a well-defined path
 - ii. Taking some grain to assuage their hunger
- c. Pharisees were also traveling

VI. The Charge: reaping (not traveling)

- a. prohibited on Shabbat

VII. Jesus Answers

- a. He answers for the group as the Holy Spirit will answer for the church during the Last Days
- b. Humanitarian
 - i. Human need comes first
 - ii. God is concerned about life and health
 - iii. Life comes before Law
- c. Davidic/Messianic
 - i. Jesus appeals to scripture as a precedent
 - ii. "Have you not read?"
 - iii. David's situation
 - 1. He and his companions pursued by Saul
 - 2. They eat the consecrated bread from the altar
 - 3. They are not punished by man or by God
 - iv. David was Israel's greatest king, messianic precursor
 - v. David inaugurates a future and more glorious messianic reign
 - vi. Jesus compares this messianic prototype to Himself
 - vii. Jesus has special rights, as did King David.
 - viii. Jesus implies that He has a standing similar to that of cherished King David
- d. Cosmic
 - i. Jesus, as the Son of Man, has been given God's full authority (Daniel 7:13-14)

- ii. ¹³ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man (bar enash), coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.
- iii. A solid biblical interpretation
 - 1. "Son of God" (at least) originated as a designation of (human) kingship (see 2 Samuel 7:14)
 - 2. "Son of Man" may have originally designated a heavenly figure at home beside God's throne, and possessing cosmic authority (Daniel 7:13-14)

VIII. Purpose of Shabbat

- a. Jesus says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
- b. Garden of Eden – no work
- c. God "knew" man would spend his days in toil
- d. God instituted Shabbat as a rest, a blessing, a time of refreshment
 - i. God did not want to fit man into Shabbat
- e. Heaven – no work

IX. What to do about Shabbat

- a. Jesus didn't end Shabbat
 - i. He invites us into its life!
- b. The Old Testament Shabbat
 - i. Not just any day of the seven, but exactly and precisely, by law, the seventh day
 - 1. Not in exact compliance with the Old Testament just by resting on any day of the week
- c. Early Jewish Christians
 - i. May have commemorated the seventh day as the (Old Testament) Shabbat
 - ii. May have commemorated the first day as the day of Jesus' resurrection
- d. Options for Shabbat
 - i. Shift Shabbat to the first day of the week
 - ii. The first day becomes both a day of rest and the day of resurrection
- e. Implications from Romans 14:5-9
 - i. Some Christians concluded that (seventh day) Shabbat was no longer in effect
 - ii. Some Christians concluded that (seventh day) Shabbat remained in effect
 - iii. Paul considered the issue to be resolvable either way

X. Healing a man with a withered hand

- a. Jesus is in the synagogue on Shabbat
 - i. Teaching (Luke) in Capernaum (?)
- b. A man suffered from a distorted right(?) hand
 - i. Sometimes seen as a divine punishment for sins
- c. Some observers were watching Him
 - i. "hanging in suspense" with sinister motives
 - ii. They would deny Jesus right to do good while conspiring to do evil
- d. Jesus asks the man to step forward
 - i. Jesus initiates the healing
 - ii. He provoked this situation

- iii. He was not trapped
 - iv. He could have healed the man another day
 - v. He stepped boldly into it!
- e. Jesus asks "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"
 - i. "To do good or evil" refers to Jesus healing
 - 1. Jesus response to human need
 - ii. "To save life or to kill" refers to Jesus Himself
 - 1. Observers response to Jesus
 - iii. Jesus knew their hearts
 - iv. Jesus shuts their mouths
 - 1. "But they remained silent."
- f. Jesus heals the man
 - i. Man has a choice and chooses faith
- g. Jesus' purpose in healing
 - i. Promote thriving and fullness of Life
 - ii. Desired to open Shabbat up to healing and wholeness not to guard it against every possible violation
 - iii. Confront the Pharisees about their hypocrisy and rigidity
- h. The Pharisees hardness of heart
 - i. Jesus is angry
 - 1. Only time in scripture this word (Greek) is used
 - 2. Righteous indignation, sorrow, pity
 - 3. Anguish second only to Gethsemane
 - ii. Not just their lack of human sympathy
 - iii. Intent of the heart vs. what can be empirically measured
 - iv. Jesus chose the riskier pathway in order to reveal the Father's heart
- i. The final "insult"
 - i. "Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus."
 - ii. They saw nothing in the supernatural healing
 - iii. They had only fury against Jesus
 - 1. He publicly challenged them
 - iv. Jesus displays mercy, Pharisees display hatred
 - v. Went out of the synagogue out from God's presence
- j. A Strange alliance
 - i. Herodians were Hellenists
 - ii. Pharisees opposed Greek/Roman influence
 - iii. Common enemy – common threat
 - 1. Pharisees – religiously
 - 2. Herodians – politically