

## The Gospel According to Mark

### The Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-3:6

Sunday, May 3, 2020

#### Introduction

While descriptions of Jesus often emphasize His humility, compassion and meekness, all of which Jesus exemplified, He was by no means soft-spoken or passive, and Mark 2 makes that abundantly clear.

As we move through Mark chapters 2 and 3 Mark records a series of five events in which religious leaders are confronting and questioning Jesus. As they seek to shame and discredit Him, Jesus is anything but passive or reserved. He is quick to answer the Pharisees in ways that show both His authority and their error. They may be known as experts on the Sabbath, but He is the Lord of the Sabbath.

#### Issues of Sabbath Keeping

Of all the aspects of Jewish life and custom, the Sabbath was at the center. It was established by God and was a weekly gift of rest and a symbol of the nations covenant relationship with God (Exodus 20:9-11; 31:12-16). God had established parameters for the day, but over time the religious leaders added rules upon rules, eventually turning God's good gift and blessing into a burden and chore.

#### Jesus Declares His Authority: He is the Lord of the Sabbath (2:23-28)

- **The Setting (vv. 23-24)** – As Jesus and his disciples walk through a field the disciples help themselves to some grain, a normally acceptable practice (Deut. 23:24-25). However, because it was the Sabbath day a group of Pharisees accuse them of doing what is unlawful. According to Scribal law (not God's law), reaping of any kind (even with their hands as they walked) constituted work and was unlawful on the Sabbath.
- **The Response of Jesus (vv. 25-28)**
  - **An appeal to the Scriptures (vv. 25-26)** – Jesus begins His response by pointing to a story from the life of David as precedent (1 Samuel 21:1-6). For the Pharisees legalism always prevailed, but Jesus suggests that there are times when the spirit of the Law and the needs of people matter more than legalistic adherence.
  - **An appeal to the intent of the Sabbath (vs. 27)** – Next Jesus appeals to the heart and purpose of the Sabbath. God gave the Sabbath to His people as a gift and to be a blessing, not a as a burden or a chore. The Law of God was good and meant for good, but the religious leaders turned it into a burdensome yoke.

- **An appeal to His authority (vs. 28)** – As Jesus concludes His response He offers the ultimate statement of authority. While the Pharisees were well educated in the Law, Jesus is in fact, the Lord of the Sabbath. He created the Sabbath (Gen. 1-2), He is sovereign over the Sabbath as Lord over all, and He is the fulfillment of the Sabbath. Through Jesus we can enter God's eternal rest (Hebrews 4:9-10).

#### Jesus Demonstrates His Authority as Lord of the Sabbath (3:1-5)

- **The Setting (vv. 1-2)** – Once again Jesus is being watched by the Pharisees on a Sabbath day as they seek to accuse and discredit Him. This time they wait to see if He will heal a man with a withered hand. According to scribal law (not God's Law), healing was only permitted on the Sabbath for the purpose of saving a life – otherwise it must wait.
- **Questioned by Jesus (vv. 3-4)** – Before the Pharisees have a reason to accuse, Jesus approaches them with questions. He asks questions that reveal that they love their system of rules more than they love people in need, exposing their legalism and hypocrisy (Matthew 12:11-12). Knowing that any answer will entrap them, the Pharisees remain silent.
- **The Response of Jesus (vs. 5a)** – As the Pharisees sit in stubborn silence, Mark records Jesus' inner response: anger and grief. The core of Jesus anger probably reflects His feelings of the entire system of works-based religion that had been established, that the Pharisees stood for. He is angered by their hypocrisy and legalism, but He is also grieved by their unbelief that flows out of hardened hearts.
- **The Healing (vs. 5b)** – The focus of the passage is on Jesus and the Pharisees, but don't not miss power of Jesus as heals this man's hand. Jesus was pleased to do good rather than follow religious rules.

**The Response to Jesus' Claims of Authority – Kill Him (3:6)** – While Jesus both declared and demonstrated His authority, this only further fueled the opposition. While the Pharisees sought to accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath for healing a man (doing good), they used the Sabbath to plot the death of Jesus (to kill, vs. 4).

#### Things to Consider:

- **Jesus is Lord!** – This is a constant theme up to this point in the Gospel of Mark, the Lordship of Jesus. Recognizing the authority of Jesus should lead us to worship, obedience and trust in Him.
- **Jesus is the Way of Salvation** – Over and over we see the Pharisees clinging to a works-based salvation, and this is still common today. We all are inclined to believe in our own goodness. But Jesus came to declare our need of forgiveness and the salvation that is only available in Him.