

MARK 2:13 to 3:35 – THE GROWING OPPOSITION TO JESUS

As we make our way through Mark's Gospel we notice this rising hostility toward Jesus on the part of the Jewish religious leaders. At first, they objected silently. As time goes by, however, their opposition grows and it becomes more open and vocal. As we will see, their hatred for Jesus becomes so intense that they actually plot to kill Him.

Jerry Vines in his commentary makes this quote. He says, "It's amazing that the only sinless one, the one who came into this world to be the fulfillment of the highest hopes and aspirations of their religion, came into their midst and was hated."

Why is there this hostility between Jesus and the organized religion of His day? To answer that question, we need to define "religion" first. It is the human attempt to find God, to reach God. That is what religion is. By contrast, Jesus is God's attempt to reach fallen humanity. Religion at its core is works. Jesus offers grace. The hostility goes beyond merely a difference in world views, a difference in how you look at things. That is true. They were looking at things completely differently. But in regard to the religious leaders of His day, Jesus challenges their authority. He exposes their hypocrisy. Jesus becomes an increasing threat to their status. And they don't like it one bit. So, it is not just that they disagree with Him. Jesus is challenging them and exposing them for who they are.

So, with that, let's get into Mark Chapter 2 and verse 13...

READ Mark 2:13-14

So now this is the fifth disciple Jesus has called, a man named Levi. You know him better by his other name, Matthew.

READ Mark 2:15

There is this dinner at Levi's house. Being a tax collector, he is an employee of the Roman government. Tax collectors were not highly regarded by the Jewish people because they worked for the Romans, the

enemy. What Levi has done is he has put on this dinner at his house. He is a brand new follower of Jesus, just been called. And so, he invites Jesus and the other four disciples to join him. He wants to introduce his friends to Jesus. There is nothing wrong with that, right? Well, the scribes apparently don't like it.

READ Mark 2:16

The reason for their resentment toward Jesus is rooted in a false concept of themselves. They view themselves as men of God. They follow God's moral law. And here is Jesus, supposedly this rabbi, this great teacher, and He is socializing with a bunch of reprobate sinners. Doesn't He know any better than to do that? What's wrong with Him? So, their real problem, as we see here, is rooted in spiritual pride.

These scribes are Jewish, right? But to me they sound a lot like many Baptists I have known. They truly believe that they are superior to those people that Jesus is hanging around. Why do they believe this? Because they, the scribes, are doing all the right religious things. They are going to the synagogue or the temple every Saturday. They study the scriptures. They keep the Law. They are living a good moral life. And that makes them better (at least in their minds) than other people who may not do those things. But are they really any better? Are we any better? The fact of the matter is, despite all that religious stuff, we are ALL sinners. So, their issue is really not a whole lot different from a lot of church people today. They are filled with spiritual pride. It is an easy thing to do when we forget where we came from. We were saved only by the grace of God. I like what our pastor reminded us today in his sermon. It is not that we were bad people that were made better. We were DEAD in our trespasses and sins and were made alive. So, we were saved only by the grace of God. "Not as a result of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

Jesus, having just overheard the scribes talking to His disciples, speaks up...

READ Mark 2:17

So there you have the answer to Q1 right there. The people at this dinner at Levi's house are in fact, sick hurting people in need of a physician, aren't they? And Jesus, the great Physician is making house calls. So, what sickness do they have? The same one as the rest of humanity. It is called "SIN." We all have a sin problem, right? That is our disease. And the prognosis of this disease is that it is terminal. It is going to kill you. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Jesus's whole purpose in coming is to save us sinners from our sin. He came to bring us salvation. He came to change our lives by the power, love, and grace of God.

Now, Mark doesn't give us any of the response by these scribes to what Jesus just said. It is not recorded. What Mark does, like he does throughout his gospel, is just move to the very next scene. That is what he does here.

READ Mark 2:18-20

John here refers to John the Baptist. So, what is the answer to Q2? When do the guests of the bridegroom NOT fast? When the bridegroom is with them, v 19. In this illustration the bridegroom represents Jesus and the wedding guests would be His disciples and other followers. Right now, Jesus is with them, physically with them, right? They are enjoying His presence and having good fellowship with Him. This is a time of joy, even celebration. Later, when Jesus goes to the cross and He is taken away from them, that will certainly bring weeping and sadness, won't it? There is a time and a season for everything. What Jesus is saying here is basically this: "While I am here with them in the flesh is NOT the time for fasting."

Then Jesus switches analogies...

READ Mark 2:21-22

So, what is Jesus's point here? Traditional Judaism as is being practiced, that old religious system, is the old garment and the old wineskins. Jesus has come to bring something new and different into their

lives. He is the new unshrunk cloth. He is the fresh wineskin. Q3: where do you NOT put the new wine? In old wineskins, v 22.

Jesus's point is this – thank you, John MacArthur: "Jesus didn't come with a message to patch up the old system. He came with a message to replace it altogether. He brought a new internal gospel of repentance and forgiveness by grace that cannot be mixed with the old Judaism of tradition and self-righteous works, or with any other religion."

Once again, the scene shifts to a local grain field...

READ Mark 2:23-24

Once again, this issue of violating the Sabbath is brought up. It occurs frequently during Jesus's ministry as we will see. The Pharisees had 39 rules about what you could and could not do on the Sabbath. The disciples are violating one of these rules, specifically, that you could not pluck wheat. This was considered to be reaping, harvesting grain. According to Exodus 34:21 you were to rest from all harvesting activities on the Sabbath. So, here come the religious police in the middle of this grain field. They ask Jesus, "Why are Your disciples breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?"

Q4: True or false? Jesus responded by telling them a Bible story. True.

In response to the Pharisees, Jesus tests their superior knowledge of the Old Testament. "Haven't you read what David did?"

READ Mark 2:25-26

"Don't you remember that story, Pharisees? Don't you remember?" This was an actual event recorded in 1 Samuel Chapter 21. You can read about it in your Bible. Ahimelech, the priest of Nob, a servant of God, gave David and his companions five loaves of holy bread from the Table of Presence, which was in the tabernacle. If you will recall, David and his men were running away from King Saul (because King Saul is trying to kill David). They were tired and famished. Because there was no other bread available for them to eat, the priest gave them this bread. The priest

recognized that David was God's man. That was part of it. But also, he knew that he had an obligation to meet a fundamental human need – to feed the hungry. This took precedence over the law. So, this holy bread was, technically, according to the law, to be eaten only by the priests. That is what the law said. But this was an emergency situation. If the priest had followed the letter of the law he would have said something like this: "I'm sorry, David, but we can't give you anything to eat." Instead, the priest was filled with compassion and he gave David and his men holy bread to sustain them. Jesus is strongly implying that what the priest did in that situation was the right thing to do.

Jesus's whole point is this: the Sabbath is not to be some sort of a burdensome thing like the Jewish religious leaders have turned it into.

READ Mark 2:27-28

Q5: Why did Jesus say the Sabbath was made, v 27? It was made for man. The Sabbath was originally set up by God to be a day of rest and refreshment. It is to be a good day for man. You work hard all week. You need a day of rest – a day to relax and unwind. God knew that we humans would need that. He made us, so He knows what we need. And He gave us a day to rest.

Jesus, the Son of Man, the Lord of the Sabbath is taking on the role of that priest in the story of David. He is telling His disciples, "It's OK. Pluck the grain in order to satisfy your hunger. It's OK."

Well, this whole Sabbath day controversy spills over into Chapter 3, which we are about to get into. The scene shifts from this grain field to the synagogue, probably in Capernaum.

READ Mark 3:1-2

Here we go again! Jerry Vines thinks that the man with the withered hand was planted there in the synagogue by the religious leaders. Possibly. We know that the Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus. V 2 says, "So that they might accuse Him."

READ Mark 3:3

So, there you have the answer to Q6, "Come here." That is what Jesus says.

READ Mark 3:4

They probably thought it was a trick question. But it is not a trick question, is it? According to the 39 Jewish Sabbath rules, healing was prohibited except in cases to save someone's life. So, He asks this question. You would think that the answer to Jesus's question is obvious. It is obviously better to do good and to save life. It is not a trick question. But (this is Q7) what answer do they give Jesus? No answer! Why don't the Pharisees answer Jesus? Because they want to do harm to Jesus. They want to discredit Him, to make Him look bad. Ultimately, as we will see, they want to kill Jesus. So, even though they do not answer Jesus, He knows their hearts. Look at His reaction to them...

READ Mark 3:5

Jesus's reaction to the silence of the religious leaders is a combination of grief and anger. His anger is a righteous indignation. Jesus is aware of the evil in their hearts. Does Jesus actually, technically, violate their Sabbath rule? What work does He do? Telling the man to stretch out his hand is not a violation. You are allowed to communicate with people. You can talk to them. He doesn't apply any ointment or anything else that a doctor would do. No medical diagnosis was given. None of that. That would be work. But He doesn't do any of that. The man's hand just becomes restored miraculously. Jesus merely wills the man's hand to be healed and it is. That is NOT work, is it? Just thinking something is not work, is it? So for the record, clearly Jesus never violates their Sabbath rule. And yet, look at their response to Him...

READ Mark 3:6

Q8: What was the response to Jesus doing this good deed? They plot to kill Him. Isn't that amazing? These two religious groups disagree about

almost everything theologically. And yet they come together and plot to kill Jesus. At this point, very early in Jesus's ministry (we are only in Mark Chapter 3), and the Jewish religious leaders are already planning ways to get rid of Jesus. They hate Jesus so much that they want Him dead. What harm had Jesus done in healing the man with the withered hand? What harm? Or the paralyzed man or the leper or any of the others? None. They just hate Jesus that much.

READ Mark 3:7-12

Similar to what we have seen happen before. Despite playing down what He is doing and telling people that He heals and the demons not to say anything, word is spreading about Jesus. Large crowds of people are following Jesus from everywhere – from Galilee and the surrounding regions. The thing that stands out to me from these verses is v 8 where it says, "When the great crowd heard all that He was doing, they came to Him." There you have the answer to Q9. The crowds are drawn to Jesus because of what he is doing. People are coming out to watch the Jesus show. The majority of people are not following Jesus because they believe He is the Messiah or the Son of God. There are some, but most are not coming out for that reason. And they are not following Him to hear His great preaching. Some might, but for the most part that is not it. They are fascinated by His miracles and healings, all those incredible things that He has been doing. They want to see more. That is why most people are coming to see Jesus.

So far Jesus we have seen Jesus call five disciples. In each case Jesus told them to follow Him and they did so immediately, without hesitation. Next, we are going to see Jesus calling seven more disciples. That will give Him a total of twelve.

READ Mark 3:13-15

That parenthetical statement in v 14, "whom He also named apostles" is not included in most of the other English translations. If you have the New American Standard Bible (NASB) or the New International Version

(NIV), they do not include that statement. The statement in parenthesis may be there to remind Mark's audience that these twelve men (chosen by Jesus) will later become known as the apostles. But I think the main point has to do with the word apostle itself. The word "apostle" means "one who is sent." And it says that Jesus sends them out. So, yes, we think of them as "The Twelve Disciples," right? But they are also, even during Jesus's ministry, twelve apostles. It is not like they were the disciples and then after Jesus's resurrection and ascension they became the apostles. And even though we usually refer to these men as "The Twelve Disciples," the fact is that they are also apostles. They are apostles at the same time they are disciples. That is what I want you to see here.

There are three main purposes mentioned for Jesus calling these twelve men. First, to be with Him, for fellowship. Second, to preach. We don't often think about the disciples during Jesus's ministry being preachers, but He does send them out later in groups of two to preach. The third reason is so that they could be the extension of Jesus, doing the same types of things that He has been doing – healing, casting out demons, showing compassion, and so forth.

Q10. Who did Jesus call up on the mountain side? Those whom He decided. He didn't just call anybody. "Anybody who wants to come, you can come!" He didn't do that. He did not call the crowds. He called those whom HE wanted, who He desired. Now, why these 12 men? Because Jesus desired them. That is the best answer I can give you. They didn't have any particular qualifications. They had not gone to seminary. They were just the ones Jesus decided upon. "I want these twelve." And v 13 it says that "they came to Him." So, give them credit. He calls them and they come. Like I said, no qualifications other than this – Jesus wanted them and they willingly followed Him. That's it.

As I was reading this passage, I contemplated my own calling to Christ. What a privilege it is that Jesus called ME to follow HIM. By the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I responded to His call. This is just me reflecting, being really honest with you... Looking back, I realize that I

would never have followed Jesus if He had not called me first. I am so thankful that He did. Why wouldn't I (have followed Him)? Because I was DEAD! That is why I say you really need to remember where you were. So I look back and say, except for God's grace I never would have followed Christ.

READ Mark 3:16-19

Twelve ordinary men, right? Jesus ministers to these guys for three and a half years and they will go out and change the world.

Judas Iscariot is an interesting study. He is listed last. Mark simply refers to him as the one who betrayed Jesus. That is Judas's lasting legacy. Q11: True or false? Jesus had NO idea that Judas would eventually betray Him. False. Jesus is God. It is interesting that when Jesus calls Judas He knows that one day Judas is going to betray Him. Jesus knows that Judas is going to betray Him. He knows this when He calls him. Jesus knows that Judas will be Satan's instrument to have Jesus delivered over to be killed. Satan and the enemies of Jesus will think they have won when they crucify Jesus. But it is all part of God's grand plan to redeem fallen humanity. Jesus knows this. Judas will become the instrument to make this happen. Now, that is not a defense of what Judas does. Not at all. He is still condemned in Scripture for betraying Jesus. God still condemns Judas for that. He is still responsible for his own actions. This is an example that shows us that God is sovereign and that He can and does use the evil actions of reprobate people for His own divine purposes.

READ Mark 3:20-21

Here you have the answer to Q12. Jesus's own family thinks He is crazy. It's interesting because at this point Jesus is enjoying a very successful ministry. He has called His twelve disciples. He has this tremendous following. His popularity is soaring. And yet the religious leaders want to kill Him and His own family thinks He is crazy.

The end of this chapter, v 31-35, actually connects here. The connection is Jesus's family. So, that is where we are going to go next. Remember, his family thinks He is crazy.

READ Mark 3:31-32

When Jesus is informed of His family's arrival, He has a most peculiar response.

READ Mark 3:33-35

Jesus is not denying or ignoring His earthly family. There is a special bond that exists with those you grew up around. It is no different with Jesus. He knows that they think He is crazy at this point. But that is not what His focus is. His focus is on the people around Him. He is looking around at all the people in this room who are sitting there and they are listening intently to what He has to say.

Q13 asks, who did Jesus say were His mother, brothers and sisters? V 35 says, "Whoever does the will of God," right? That is a very broad statement. So, the purpose for this question is to get you to focus on a more specific application. In other words, "Here---" Jesus says, and He points to the people in the room --- "This is My family." Jesus's point is this: Our spiritual ties, our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ can and often do become closer than our ties to our own physical earthly family. Some of you may be able to attest to that. It isn't that you don't love your family and you are not close to them, but there is something about your church family, your Christian brothers and sisters that you are around. Jesus is developing at this point a very strong bond with His disciples and even with those who are truly seeking Him and who want to have a spiritual relationship with Him. That's why the answer (to Q13) is "Those who are seeking Him." Isn't that God's will? Isn't it God's will that we seek Jesus? And that is His application here. "These are the people that are seeking to know who I am. They are doing God's will."

At this point Jesus is right on track to fulfill His Father's will. His focus is to complete His mission. Maybe the people around Him do not know

what that mission is yet, but Jesus knows. He is doing everything He is supposed to be doing. He is teaching and preaching God's truth. He is showing compassion and kindness. He is healing people. The opinions out there about Jesus are mixed, aren't they? Sure, you have many who are amazed by Him. Crowds of people are following Him for various reasons. He is quite popular and He is well-liked by the masses. He does have this close-knit group of disciples around Him – twelve men, right? And yet there is also growing opposition toward Him, even hatred. Jesus is becoming increasingly misunderstood. Despite everything He has done and said, His own family thinks He is crazy.

So, let me ask you this in closing. Transport yourself in your mind back into that time – 30 something A.D. in Galilee. Now you are there. What would YOU be thinking about Jesus at this point in His ministry? **Which group would you find yourself in?** Just something to think about, to ponder as we move on in our study of Mark.

[Note: I received some push back from my class when I asked the question above. Their contention was this: "Since we know how the story ends this is not a fair question. You can't ask that." OK, that is fair enough. But my point is for you to put yourself in their place and suppose that you only know what they know based on what Jesus has said and done so far. Given that, what would you be thinking about Him?]

One of the problems is that we know the ending. We know what is going to happen. What I wanted to try and get you to think about is, how did it look at the time it was happening? What were the people's mindsets? It is interesting to think about it from that standpoint. Put yourself in their position. You can understand why the opinions about Jesus are so varied. You really can. So, don't be too hard on these people because you have an advantage. You know the end of the story and they don't.