

The Gospel According To Mark

Part Six

Mark 2:13-17 [New King James] *“Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi’s house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, ‘How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”*

Steadily and inexorably the synagogue door was shutting on Jesus Christ.

Between Jesus Christ and the guardians of Jewish orthodoxy war had been declared.

Jesus Christ was now teaching by the lakeside and the people were going to Him.

The Son of God was banned from the place which was regarded as the house of God!

Galilee was one of the great road centres of the ancient world, a land bridge between Europe and Africa, another road led from Acre on the coast across the Jordan to Arabia.

Capernaum was by nature a frontier town, a custom’s centre where import and export taxes were collected.

Levi [another name for Matthew] was a tax collector working for Herod Antipas, a well hated man.

Tax gatherers can never be a popular section of the community, but in the ancient world they were hated because of the way they overcharged to line their own pockets.

Matthew must have listened to Jesus Christ on the outskirts of the crowds and something must have stirred his heart, and he must have hated himself because of his hated trade.

Matthew could not have fellowshiped with the orthodox “good” people of his day, to them he was unclean, and they would refuse to have anything to do with him.

We need to consider the great impact that Jesus Christ’s call to follow him had on Matthew.

Matthew’s first response was to invite Jesus Christ and His disciples to his home for a meal.

Then willingly give up what was a lucrative job, that he could never return to, unlike some of the other disciples who could go back to their fishing trade.

Having accepted Matthew’s invitation to a meal shows more than other things Jesus Christ’s difference to the scribes and Pharisees and orthodox good people of His day.

The scribes and Pharisees looked on from outside and assumed that Jesus Christ was tainting Himself through this fellowship with sinners.

The Pharisees were right in their judgement according to the law, [**Leviticus 15:7; Numbers 19:22**].

The Pharisees knew Jesus was no ordinary man, they had seen His healing miracles, they had heard Him forgive sins and seen Him cast out evil spirits.

The Pharisees authority, based only on the law given them through Moses, was being questioned.

The Pharisees' interpretation of the law given through Moses was threatened.

The Pharisees had overlooked the prophecy of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 [New King James] *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”*

God is now **not** interested in the self-righteous cleaned appearance of a person but interested in cleansed minds and hearts.

Instead of sinners making Jesus Christ unclean by associating with them, Jesus Christ was making sinners clean through His life, death and resurrection.

This was the good news that Jesus Christ had brought from God the Father.

Mark 2:18-20 [New King James] *“The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.’”*

Although fasting was **not** part of the law of Moses, with the exception of the Day of Atonement, [Leviticus 23:26-32], **fasting had become an important expression of the Pharisees' meticulous devotion to the ceremonial law.**

To the Pharisees, if Jesus Christ's disciples were not fasting on the second and fourth day of every week, as the Pharisees had, then it called into question their piety, sincerity and devotion to the law.

In the eyes of the Pharisees Jesus Christ's attitude towards the law was questioned because He healed on the Sabbath, His disciples had been noticed picking grain on the Sabbath, [Matthew 12:1; Mark 2:23; Luke 6:1] and eating without the prescribed ceremonial washing, add to this no fasting, it was just too much for them to accept.

Mark 2:21-22 [New King James] *“No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.”*

For Jesus Christ's disciples to fast while He was still with them, would be like patching an old garment with new cloth or pouring wine, still fermenting into old wine skins.

The ceremonial laws that were added to the Ten Commandments were to remind the people that they were sinners because they were not keeping the Ten Commandments.

Mark 2:23-28 [New King James] *“Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, ‘Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’ But He said to them, ‘Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?’ And He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. **Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.**’”*

The key to understanding these words of Jesus Christ is in the last verse.

The Sabbath still has been given to humans to point them towards the Creator God, but the way we keep it is decided by Jesus Christ Who is Lord of the Sabbath.

The Ten Commandments are our complete package, we **cannot** choose which part we obey or reject.

Romans 7:7 [New King James] *“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’”*

The Ten Commandments still confirm what is sin under the New Covenant.

Romans 3:20 [New King James] *“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

We cannot be made just, free from sin, by keeping the law, but it does tell us we need to seek forgiveness for sin.

Matthew 5:17 [New King James] *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.”*

Jesus Christ fulfilled all that the prophets foretold the Messiah would be and do.

Jesus Christ also shows us that the Ten Commandments were fulfilled under the New Covenant, in our minds and hearts, by love towards God and other human beings, [Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:10].

This is how the Ten Commandments are used correctly, [1 Timothy 1:8-10].

Mark 3:1-6 [New King James] *“And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’ Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.”*

For Jesus Christ to go back into a synagogue was the act of a brave man. In the synagogue there was a deputation from the Sanhedrin. No-one could miss them, for in the synagogue the front seats were seats of honour and they would sit there.

It was the duty of the Sanhedrin to deal with anyone who was likely to mislead the people and lead them away from the rituals that had been added to the law and statutes.

The last thing these men were there to do was to worship and learn.

They were there to scrutinise Jesus Christ’s every action.

The orthodox Jewish attitude towards the Sabbath was completely rigid and unbending.

Jesus Christ knew this and this man's life was not in danger, physically he would be no worse off if his healing was left until after the Sabbath day.

For Jesus Christ this was a test case, and He met it fairly and squarely.

Jesus Christ told this man to rise and come out of his place and stand where everyone could see him and his wretchedness.

Jesus Christ then asked the experts of the law, *“Is it lawful to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath day?”*

He put them in a dilemma.

They were bound to admit it was lawful to do good, and that is exactly what He proposed to do.

To drive home the statement, Jesus Christ asked a second question, *“Is it lawful to save a life or to kill?”*

Jesus Christ was taking steps to save this man's wretched life while the Pharisees were thinking out methods of how to kill Jesus Christ.

To the Pharisees religion was ritual.

To Jesus Christ religion was loving service.

Mark 3:7-12 [New King James] *“But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, ‘You are the Son of God.’ But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.”*

Crowds can be dangerous, crowds do not have brains like people, they cannot reason, crowds can only react in many ways like an animal reacts.

People in crowds often suspend good judgement and do things they would never do if they were alone and thinking.

Crowds can be thrilled one moment and furious the next.

Crowds are unpredictable and for that reason potentially dangerous.

Evil people can stir up crowds to do evil things.

Likewise, good people can calm crowds and set the people back to straight thinking, [Acts 19:24-41].

Jesus Christ took precautions, [verses 9-10] also with a large crowd His voice would be more easily heard, as sound travels more effectively over water.

The crowd saw Jesus Christ as a great healer, the demons saw something else, [verse 11] the Son of God, but Jesus Christ ordered them to be silent.

The term “Son of God” had several meanings in the ancient world.

In Gentile nations, it was not uncommon for kings to bear the title “*Son of God*,” kings of Egypt were “*Sons of Ra*” the Egyptian sun god, many Roman emperors held the title “*Son of God*.”

In the Old Testament, for example, angels were referred to as “*Sons of God*” [Job 1:6].

Israel itself was called the “*Son of God*” [Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1].

God referred to the king of Israel as “*My Son*” [2 Samuel 7:14].

The demons knew that Jesus Christ was Emmanuel [God with us] or as in **Hebrews 1:2-3** the express image of God.

Why did Jesus Christ silence the demons and not want the people to know at that time who He was?

Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Anointed One, the King, the Son of David and the Son of God.

But God’s idea of Messiahship was radically different from the crowd’s idea of Messiahship.

Spiritual salvation of grace, truth, sacrifice and love were the marks of the authentic Messiahship.

A physical conquering kind with mighty armies overthrowing the Romans was the crowd’s idea of the Messiah, a physical salvation.

The crowd that praised Jesus Christ on His entry into Jerusalem were, a week later, stirred up by evil men demanding His murder, [Mark 11:8-10; Mark 15:13-14].

Jesus Christ was not what the Messiah watchers were looking for.

Instead, Jesus Christ was far more than the crowds could ever have dared dream or hope. He was more than they were, yet capable of fully comprehending.

Jesus Christ was Yhwh Himself, Immanuel [God with us] come to His people as one of them, come to all humanity as one of us, come to deliver us all from the greatest oppression of all, our sins, and introduce humanity to their eternal future as created children in the Kingdom of God.