

MARK: OUR PREACHING MANUAL

SECOND DIVISION

II. 1:14-4:34 *WHAT IS THE MESSIAH'S "WORKING" PLAN?*

THIRD SECTION: *THE KINGDOM AS A BODY AND BRIDE*

Mark 2:13-3:6

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II. 1:14-4:34 WHAT IS THE MESSIAH'S "WORKING PLAN"?

<i>KINGDOM</i> Colossians 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:1-10	<i>PRIESTHOOD</i> 1 Peter 2:4-10; Hebrews 7:22-10:39	<i>BODY</i> Ephesians 5:22-33	<i>HOUSEHOLD</i> Ephesians 2:19-22	<i>FIELD</i> 1 Corinthians 3:6-9
1:14,15 To Galilee : A political entity He preached the kingdom Repent Believe	1:32-34 At the door Received people Ministered to them A priest at the door	2:13-17 Called Levi Doctor for the sick Condemnation of law upon sinners The Savior of sinners	3:7-12 A great crowd came to Jesus from many regions The demons cried " Son of God "	4:1-9 The Sower Jesus at work preaching (planting)
1:16-20 4 Fishermen at the Sea of Galilee : A commercial scene Leave Follow	1:35-39 Early prayer Represented people to God Preached in towns Represented God to the people	2:18-22 Disciples fast & feast The order of law - moral & spiritual orientation Help with God & help for living	3:13-19 12 Apostles called, appointed, designated to be with him He will send them and they will have authority	4:10-25 The Mystery to those who seek The Sower is " interpreted " (watering) for the 12 & others How to respond to parables?
1:21-28 The demon cast out in the synagogue : A religious scene Hear Obey	1:40-45 A leper cleansed Sacrifice & Priest Jesus' testimony to the priests A sacrifice	2:23-28 They plucked grain because of their hunger Spirit of law - our real needs met - Lord of Sabbath is concerned	3:20-30 Holy Spirit " House ", " Eat ", " Family ", " Kingdom " Unity, strength, holiness	4:26-32 Seed parables Growth through invisible agent (God) Miraculous growth
1:29-31 Peter's Mother-in-law healed at home : A domestic scene Rise Serve	2:1-12 A paralytic and a break-in Sins forgiven By God's authority The way to God	3:1-6 A hand healed Save life or kill? Do good or evil? Purpose of the Law is that we do good. Each member is important	3:31-35 The family called Mother, brothers, and sisters? Whoever does God's will	4:33,34 Jesus spoke only in parables Jesus explained everything to his own disciples (The field)

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Corresponding PowerPoint® presentation:

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The outline:

I. The recruiting of Levi - Physician and Savior 2:13-17

- The tax people's club and the sinners' circle
- The law, our judge
- Above the law?
- Powerful enough to condemn but not to save

II. Jesus' disciples did not fast - Friends of the bridegroom 2:18-22

- Marriage calls for feasting
- A place for fasting
- New and old ... it's bursting!
- How is this for a hot issue? One among many, or unique?

III. Jesus' disciples picked ears of corn on the Sabbath - Lord of Sabbath 2:23-27

- Basketfuls or handfuls?
- The *why* of the law!
- Concern for our needs
- Gives, gives, gives!
- God's law a burden or a help?
- The awful alternative!
- Handling the law sensitively

IV. Jesus healed a shriveled hand - Members of the body 3:1-6

- No secret!
- Jesus took the initiative
- What's the point? Doing good!
- A plot to kill
- A body and a marriage
- Each member important

Questions to help in the study of this section Mark 2:13-3:6

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Let's read Ephesians 5:21-33, a part of the Bible which parallels the events and sayings of Jesus found in Mark 2:13-3:6:




21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Ephesians 5:21-33 ESV).

Later in Mark chapter 4 Jesus told his disciples that the mystery of the kingdom was given to them. Paul speaks in Ephesians 5 of mystery, the mystery of the relationship of Christ with his church; it is like a marriage. It is his body, a concept emphasized earlier in Ephesians.

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I. The recruiting of Levi - Physician and Savior 2:13-17

Body and marriage 

2:13-17 The Doctor or Savior

- Jesus called Levi
- A doctor for the sick
- The law condemned the sinner
- The Savior healed the sinner

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In this narrative Jesus comes head to head with the teachers of the law who were Pharisees. In the story just before this story, of the recruiting of Levi, Jesus heals a paralytic. He begins by forgiving the man of his sins. Some teachers of the law were present at the healing of the paralytic and they questioned silently in their hearts why Jesus forgave sins, for only God could do such a thing. It was blasphemy to them. Jesus knew their hearts and brought their thoughts into the open. But another round is coming up in a battle which would see Jesus put on the cross. This time when he pals around with a no-good outcast of a tax collector they voice their opposition.

The tax people's club and the sinners' circle

Jesus called Levi and Levi followed him. With the calling of Levi Jesus would get into deeper trouble with the religious leaders. Levi was a publican, working for the Romans as a tax person. Taxes are unpopular and tax people can be unpopular. Collecting taxes for a foreign power is even worse. These men were sometimes unscrupulous, collecting more than they should. This only compounded their unpopularity. They were also outcasts of the synagogue.

With the calling of Levi, Jesus was taking an outcast of the synagogue into his inner circle of followers. This, certainly, was a challenge to the whole Jewish religious establishment! Jesus went even further. He accepted an invitation to dine at Levi's with the tax people's club and the sinners' circle. There was no way Jesus was not going to be challenged. Jesus' answer to them when they challenged him implicated the Pharisees in the game of self-righteousness, which is of no help whatsoever to publicans and sinners. Jesus skillfully and effectively launched his reply with a parallel from the world of medicine. It is only logical that a doctor deal with the sick and not the healthy.

Someone might say, "But we need preventive medicine", and it has its place, for those who are not sick. But it is too late for mankind. We cannot turn the clock back to the Garden of Eden, back to innocence. Back then God could still counsel our first fathers not to sin. But today we are all infected with the disease of sin and all need the great Physician.

Jesus came to call sinners, and Paul the apostle, a former Pharisee, added the following words in his own testimony, when he wrote to Timothy,

"15 It is a true saying, in which all may put their faith, that Christ Jesus came into the world to give salvation to sinners, of whom I am the chief. 16 But for this reason I was given mercy, so

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that in me, the chief of sinners, Jesus Christ might make clear all his mercy, as an example to those who in the future would have faith in him to eternal life (1Timothy 1:15-16 BBE1965)."

Paul admitted he was once a blasphemer, a persecutor and a violent man (1Timothy 1:13). Paul was not a tax person, nor a prostitute, but he was a sinner, and a gross sinner in other areas. As a Pharisee on the warpath against Jesus' fledgling church, he may have gone further than any of these other Pharisees, against the Lord, but they had their own sins. They really needed a Savior as much as Paul did. Nor was Paul a bad Pharisee! In Philippians he testifies of how he advanced in his country and religion, outstripping the best of them (Philippians 3:2-6).

In these four consecutive scenes Jesus would cross swords of words with various religious entities of his time. They all questioned either him or his disciples. The religious concepts that existed were all to fail. They could not understand Jesus, nor could they hold out to people all he offered to those who would follow him.

The issue in the case of Levi was not ceremonial, racial, or cultural cleanliness but eternal salvation! Jesus was giving his time to meet sinners so that they might be saved. The Jews were afraid of contamination if they were expected to be with these unclean, vile people. Jesus was going to save to himself a people, a bride, and make her without spot or blemish. He would change them for the better. But to reach them he must go to them and be with them, not to indulge in their sin, but to tell them of eternal salvation. So he spoke emphatically and penetratingly, *"They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (2:17 AV/KJV1769)."*

So the image of the body and its physician arises here. In Ephesians 5 Jesus is called the 'Savior of the body'.

The law, our judge

In all this we see the part the law plays in the salvation of us human beings. The law is our judge who condemns us to death because we have broken the law. The law is not our savior. It is our judge. It condemns us. While under this condemnation the Savior came to save us from the condemnation of the law. The Bible insists that we are all sinners, some more sophisticated than others, some more religious than others, some smarter than others, some more educated, some richer, but in the end all sinners, separated from God and condemned to death, eternal death.

If it were not for this law, the law written in our hearts as well as the law written in that of Moses, there would be no need of a savior. Now there is definitely an enormous need for a savior. God, our great Savior, sent his Son into the world to save us from our sins. Hallelujah! In the following three scenes we will add more about the law.

Above the law?

A fellow worker said something I will never forget about the attitude toward the law in his country. He said, "You know, Jack, in my culture we all think the laws of our land are very good. We all acknowledge that our laws are quite just and good laws. We are quite proud of our system of law. We think it is up to date and sound. But there is something else we all think. We all think that these wonderful laws we have are for the other guy, not for me. We all think, without

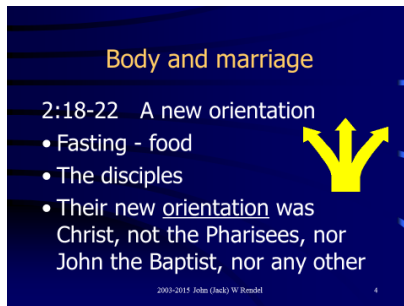
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admitting it, that our neighbor should definitely keep these laws but I myself don't really have to keep them." We have made the terrible mistake of thinking we are above the law. Jesus actually would agree with the Pharisees that the prostitutes and the tax collectors were sinners. But he would also point out that the Pharisees were sinners. They were not above the law. The law condemned them as well.

Powerful enough to condemn but not to save

So, the law is good and it is powerful enough to condemn, but the law is also weak in that it is not powerful enough to save!

II. Jesus' disciples do not fast - Friends of the bridegroom 2:18-22



“How is it that John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?” someone questioned Jesus. The tone of the question may have carried the modern tone and intent of the following questions. “Hey, why aren’t you fitting into the established religious molds that are already in vogue here? What are you anyway, some kind of an upstart? Why do you think you have the right to do your own thing, and, shouldn’t you be keeping up with the religious Jones’s?”

You see the Pharisees had long since established their place in society and the people held a certain respect or acceptance of them. John was a more recent case of religious leadership, but he had made a huge impact and was highly respected. Then Jesus appeared and as a “new kid on the block” people are bound to question him. What is more, the other two groups were fasting, apparently in concert with some tradition of fasting among the Jews, but Jesus’ disciples were not fasting.

Marriage called for feasting

“So, Jesus, why are your disciples any different from the disciples of any other religious tradition?” The image that Jesus used here switched to a marriage (see Ephesians 5:21-33 for a further discussion on body and marriage). In fact, husband and wife, according to God’s plan laid down in creation, were to become one “flesh”. Jesus explained the difference between their disciples and his, by talking to them about something they would all recognize immediately. The context is a marriage.

At a marriage ceremony you do not fast. It is one of the best excuses for feasting anyone can find anywhere at any time on the face of the planet. A marriage is an occasion for laughter, joy, eating, drinking and lots of chatter. Jesus called his disciples the ‘guests of the bridegroom’, the

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intimate and closest friends of the man who is marrying. It's not a time for sorrow and fasting but rather one of exuberance and expressions of joy!

A place for fasting

At the same time Jesus did predict a future when fasting would be appropriate, when the bridegroom, himself, will be taken from them. Surely those dark moments at his arrest, crucifixion and burial were moments for fasting. There would be times for this response later, after Jesus had gone to heaven, and they were in the middle of the battles of early church life and world evangelization. The Apostle Paul in his efforts to reach the unreached suffered much. Two of those privations were hunger and thirst. He wrote in 2Corinthians 11:27, "... *in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (ASV1901).*" (This may have been forced fasting by the circumstances, but his willingness to go through these circumstances bears out the harsh realities of the physical absence of Jesus.)

The main point is that in this new body of followers, committed to Jesus Christ, Jesus would be their new "orientation" in everything. They would not be guided by a system of traditions and rules that other religious groups had laid down. This new body would be like a marriage with the bridegroom calling the moves. They would respond to Jesus as the head over them.

New and old ... it's bursting!

Jesus went on to other parables. In the two parables of the cloths and the wineskins the conditions common to both are "new and old". When we try to combine the new and the old in the cases of cloth and wineskins we get tearing and bursting. It just does not work. "Look", says Jesus, "I'm not a patch-up job on an old system." Of course these other groups had their roots in the law of Israel, its prophets and writings, or in other words, the Old Testament Scriptures. But besides that they had many other traditions that had grown up around their beliefs and practices. John's disciples were probably not as crusty with tradition as the Pharisees were, but to have Jesus as the center of their universe rather than John would be an adjustment. Jesus knew it would tear apart anyone who was trying to follow Jesus, and who at the same time, thought John was the latest and the best of all God's prophets and spiritual leaders.

At the same time we know from the book of Hebrews that the Old Testament and the law were a shadow of things to come, namely Jesus himself! The old was to pass away and the new to take its place. Jesus was not "patching up the old" but "fulfilling the old". That 'full-filling' had to be in people who were not hanging on to the old as "the reality", but were willing to embrace Jesus as the new and the fulfillment of the old.

How is this for a hot issue? One among many, or unique?

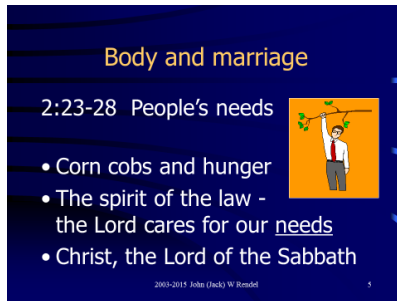
Could a particular church become so old and so crusty with tradition that Jesus was no longer their center and the fulfillment of all their hopes? Have other rulers and religious leaders robbed him of his rightful place as their bridegroom and the head of their spiritual body? I'll leave you to answer that in whatever land or context you find yourself, and remember let's not point a finger lest we find that in practice Jesus isn't really center stage in our lives. If he is not, then who is at the center of our lives, another god, prophet, teacher, guru, saint, virgin, possession, money, friend, sport, job, car, or even one's self? Jesus is not a god amongst gods, nor a prophet

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or guru amongst prophets and gurus. Peter put it this way, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”

Let us never forget that Jesus is not just one of our favorite religious teachers amongst many teachers, or the best prophet of dozens, but that he is the Savior of the body and the Bridegroom of the church. He is our point of orientation.

III. Jesus’ disciples pick ears of corn on the Sabbath - Lord of Sabbath 2:23-27



1Corinthians 12:1-3 says,

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit (ESV).

The issue of Jesus’ lordship will come up in this scene.

Then the Pharisees challenged Jesus about the actions of his disciples. It was the Sabbath, and Jesus took a route through the grain fields. As they went the disciples picked some heads of grain. I think we can safely assume that the fields did not belong to them but even if the fields were not their own property the law of Moses allowed for plucking handfuls of grain.

Deuteronomy 23:25 explains, *If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain (ESV).*

This puts our minds to rest concerning the possibility that these people were stealing. Apparently the Pharisees' complaint had to do with the Sabbath. “Why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” But by this accusation were they implying that the disciples were working on the Sabbath? Exodus 20:9-10 say,

9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates (Exodus 20:9-10 ESV).

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Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or your maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” AV/KJV1769

Basketfuls or handfuls?

So the real question is whether the disciples were working or laboring on the Sabbath. When Moses explained to Israel that the Lord would rain manna from heaven for them to eat in the desert he gave them instructions about the gathering of this food. Taking baskets out and going about gathering the manna from the ground was work. They were only to do this on the six days of the week and on the sixth they were to gather enough for the seventh day, the Sabbath, so that they did not break the law by working on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was for rest not for work.

In the reference we read earlier in Deuteronomy 23:25, the verse preceding, verse 24, may help with the difference between work, represented by gathering, and the simple act of picking up something to eat. Verse 24 reads, “*If you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket (NIV1984).*” Putting grapes in your basket, or gathering, was really work, as you would do on any harvest day. The other method of picking and eating directly was no different than going to your basket of manna on the Sabbath, gathered the day before, and picking up some to eat. One series of actions was work and the other was not.

If we look at what the disciples were doing in this light we can say they were not working. As far as I know there was no other law, which prevented people from eating grain on the Sabbath.

The why of the law!

But why then doesn’t Jesus get into a lengthy discussion about the difference between gathering a harvest and plucking fruit or grain to eat on the spot, the one action being work and the other not? Maybe he felt it was fruitless to do that, and that he must go straight to the crux of the matter, the “why” of the law.

Jesus launched into a story from the life of David. He began with a question. “*Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need (NIV1984)?*” Here is the key to God’s relationship with man. Why did he give the law to Moses and Israel? He gave it because of their spiritual and moral **need**. They needed God’s help and guidance. They needed to have their spiritual and moral hunger assuaged. They needed identity and direction in their nation and lives. Later God would say that other nations around them would admire them for the greatness and wisdom of the law their God had given them. They were like no other nation, for they had a God like no other nation (Psalm 147:15-20).

Concern for our needs

The Lord is concerned about our **need**. He does not give people rules just to burden them down with regulations. Satan would like us to believe that. As for the giving of the law of Moses, that law was large and extensive because it was for the governing and worship of a whole nation, with leadership, territory, industries, farming, education, and all that makes up a society.

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At the same time God's law need not be burdensome. If they obeyed the Lord he would lead them as a nation into unbelievable freedom and wealth outshining all the nations around them, even giving them authority over their neighbors. This was accomplished to a very high degree during the reign of David and the first part of Solomon's kingdom. God was anxious to bless them spiritually and materially with unbelievable blessing! Unfortunately, so often they looked on God's law as drudgery, and saw the rules he had given them as a burden. They did not rejoice in his person, or in his holiness, and consequently they forewent all the goodness he would have poured down on them in such abundance they would not be able to contain it all.

Gives, gives, gives!

This promise of blessing was good even in the times of Malachi, that prophet who concludes the writings of the Old Testament. In the context of his warning about robbing God, Malachi gives Israel some astounding facts about what God would do as they responded in generosity to the Lord. Listen to this!

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3:8-10 AV/KJV1769).

So God's laws were not to **add** to our **needs** but to **take care** of our **needs**. These are two entirely different ways of looking at the same thing.

David, in his need, asked Abiathar for bread and the priest gave him the shew bread, or sacred bread, which was only lawful for the priests to eat. God did not condemn David for doing something when in true need. He was running for his life and needed sustenance. We have just labored the point that the law was first given because man is needy; he is in need of the law and the law is there to help him. Why were there certain regulations surrounding the worship of God? They were there to emphasize the realities of God's holiness, as well as other attributes of his. Part of our desperate need is to know God and his attributes. These needs are parallel with our physical needs. Both needs are important.

God's law a burden or a help?

We must each decide. God's laws are either a burden or God's laws are a help. God's laws are to hurt and crush us, or God's laws are to direct and give us light. Just read Psalm 119 and you will see in which camp the psalmist was! David expressed his delight and respect for God's law in Psalm 19, verses 7-8, "*The law of the Lord is perfect reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes (NIV1984).*"

Jesus drove the point home by saying, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (2:27 NIV1984).*" He emphasized once more the fact that the Lord is concerned for man's

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wellbeing, so he instituted a day of rest for man's good. God didn't institute the Sabbath and then push man into doing or not doing things to make the Sabbath "look good"!

Let's remember that Israel had just been rescued from terrible backbreaking slavery in Egypt just prior to the institution of this law. God was taking them from a place of bondage to work on a daily basis of service for him, which included a day of rest from their work. They were becoming his servants under his benevolent care. They had been rescued from the fiery furnace of slave labor in Egypt, called time and time again the "house of bondage".

The awful alternative!

When we begin to take all we have in Christ for granted and we see only the drudgery of trying to keep his commands, which are not burdensome, we need to refresh our minds. We must remember what life was like back in the house of bondage, managed by the devil, in which there was no hope of salvation based on faith, but only a grinding hope against hope that maybe our few and feeble good works might just squeak us through on the day of judgment. We lived under the sneaking suspicion that what we were able to do would neither bring forgiveness for the wrongs, already committed, nor bring us into heaven, for what we could do was too little and too tainted by false motives, and accompanied by too much wrong doing.

The Sabbath was made for man, for his good, to supply his needs, to give him rest in a fallen world where the ground was cursed because of man's sin. What a wonderful focus it is! How easily man lost this focus and saw the things with which God blesses him in a negative light! But Jesus pressed another point home here! If these leaders of Israel, versed in the law, do not see these things, it is time he states unequivocally his authority in the matters of God's law. They have twisted the law around to appear to be the opposite of what God intended it for. This is the work of an enemy! It was time Jesus nailed his flag to the mast and told them he was Lord of even that supposedly sacrosanct day, the Sabbath. He, the Son of Man, interprets the meaning and use of the Sabbath, and not they!

Handling the law sensitively

There is another story in the Old Testament which points out the sensitivity with which Moses handled the law and highlights the dependence Israel had on the Lord in all matters. A man was discovered gathering wood on the Sabbath day. It was while they were still in the desert. They brought him to Moses and Aaron and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the Lord said to Moses, *"The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp."* So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the Lord commanded Moses (Numbers 15:32-36 NIV1984).

In this story from Numbers we are told that Israel did not stone him summarily, on the spot. They took what he was doing seriously. They recognized it as work. They had heard the law that anyone working on the Sabbath was to be put to death. Yet they hesitated, I believe, because it was a matter of life and death and they did not want the man's blood on their hands if he were innocent. So instead of executing him immediately they asked the Lord. This was yet another pause, another step, on the road to final decision, before they took his life. After all, the law was the Lord's, not theirs, and they had nothing personal against the man.

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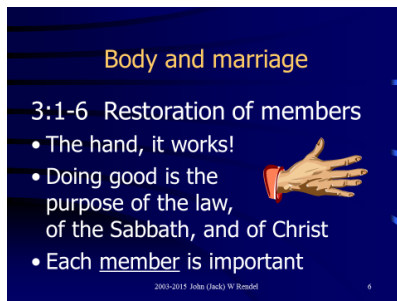
In the Pharisees' dealings with Jesus we do not see this sensitivity to the Lord and this hesitancy to take a life. They were angry with Jesus because he had contradicted them in public and challenged their authority causing personal embarrassment. They held a personal grudge. In John's gospel the high priest was worried about where all this excitement about Jesus might lead. It seemed the whole world was going after him. To them he was a threat to their religious and political power (John 11:45-53; 12:10-11, 17-19).

One of the questions that begs answering is whether, in those days, any threats or even death would have been leveled at a group of men plucking ears in the corn fields, if they had not been the disciples of Jesus. Would anyone have taken any notice? If they had noticed, would there have ensued a hair splitting argument amongst the religious powers that were, as to whether he was actually working or not? We cannot say. The text doesn't say. But the doubt remains in my mind.

In any case, what God did by giving the law as a guide and judge, and by sending Jesus to save us, he did because he was concerned about our needs.

Tensions between some of the religious leaders and Jesus come quickly to a boil, as we shall see in the next event.

IV. Jesus healed a shriveled hand - Members of the body 3:1-6



There were some that were feeling burnt and embarrassed by their encounters with Jesus. They were coming away with the short end of the stick. They had been respected as the leaders in religious and moral matters. They would become a laughing stock if things carried on as they were going. They much catch him in something, which would discredit him. Chapter 3, verse 2, described their intentions, *“Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely (NIV1984).”*

No secret!

They were watching closely to see if Jesus would heal the shriveled hand of a man on the Sabbath. They could not catch him in the area of eating so they thought they would do it on an occasion of healing. Jesus made this an occasion to challenge them. He did not quietly heal the man in a corner and send him away stealthily so that those trying to accuse Jesus would not catch him. No, he had the man stand up before everyone. He was in the public eye in that synagogue. Then Jesus with the target in his sights launched his torpedo of a question straight at his accusers. *“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill (3:4 ESV)?”* When the torpedo reached its target there was a silent explosion! They did not say a thing.

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Jesus takes the initiative

There is another item to notice here. The man with the shriveled hand did not come to Jesus asking for healing. Jesus took the initiative to heal him. Other scenes in the gospel would reveal just how busy Jesus could get healing, casting out demons and teaching. The people themselves may have drawn back from asking Jesus to heal on the Sabbath for their fear of breaking the Sabbath or for fear of condemnation by religious leaders.

That problem is born out in John's gospel with the healing of the man paralyzed for 38 years since his birth (John 5:2-15). He was thrown out of the synagogue. It seems that the healings that Jesus did on the Sabbath days may have been few so he did not make the Sabbath a day of full work schedule. He was upset that the Pharisees would strain at a gnat and swallow a camel (Matthew 23:24). They did others little good and when someone did someone some good they got upset, or prevented them from receiving the blessing!

What's the point? Doing good!

Jesus had made another telling point. God was holy and God was good. It is obvious that the things he did and the rules he laid down would be good. He was not only interested in supplying man's needs through his commands but leading man into ever greater holiness and goodness. If anything the Sabbath would be a day on which man is freed up from his work and could give time to doing good for God and for others. If they saw Jesus' healing of people as simply his work or his job, then they would have him close shop on the Sabbath. But Jesus' healing of the man was more than just work for survival's sake, it was doing the will of God and displaying his mercy, power and goodness to this man with the shriveled hand, on the very day when men were to meditate on God and his glorious attributes! Just because Jesus made a habit of healing on other days, it did not disqualify healing as work, making it something to be prohibited on the Sabbath.

A plot to kill

Jesus was angry. If people would just respond to him in faith he would overwhelm them with blessing! But they drew back and rejected him because he not only didn't fit into their fasting molds, but went entirely too far demonstrating an independence from their line of thinking that was intolerable! After he healed the man *"The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him (3:6 ESV)."*

Here is a note of irony or even sarcasm. Two groups who could hardly tolerate each other banded together against Jesus. As long as their hate for their common enemy, the Lord Jesus, was greater than their distaste for each other, they were willing to commit murder together. This was to demonstrate how really unconcerned they were for both the needs of their fellow man, and the holiness and goodness of God.

A body and a marriage

Scattered throughout these four scenes are references to the body and to marriage. In the first scene Jesus refers to the healthy, and to the sick and their need for a doctor. Here we have the symbolism of the body. In the second scene we have Jesus referring to a marriage when he speaks of the guests of the bridegroom. In all three scenes we find people eating, feeding the

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body. In the third scene we have the image of David and his hungry band of men fleeing from Saul. Again the needs of the body are registered. In the final scene it is a withered hand, again a powerful image, this time of a member of the body.

As we compare these images with what we find in the rest of the New Testament it is amazing to see that the gospel writer actually lines up the scenes like this:

The doctor is the savior of the body as is Christ. Ephesians 5:23, “... *his body, of which he is the Savior (NIV1984).*”

The bridegroom is the one around whom his guests find their orientation. Ephesians 5:23, “*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body ... (NIV1984).*”

The Lord of the Sabbath cares for the needs of his own. Ephesians 5:29, “*After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church ... (NIV1984).*”

The Healer of the members of the body considers that each member is important. Ephesians 5:25-30, “... *just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy ... without stain or wrinkle ... for we are members of his body (NIV1984).*”

Each member important

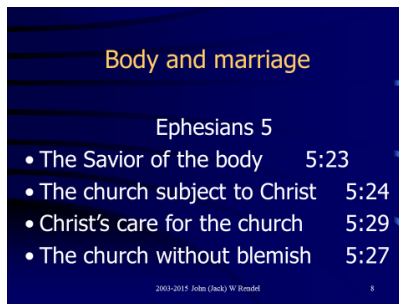
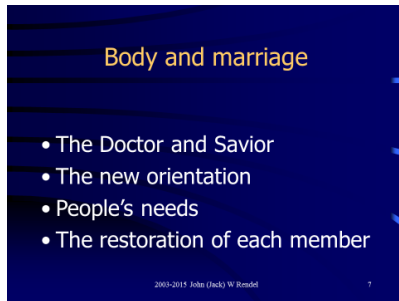
1Corinthians 12:12-15 declares,

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ, 13 for we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be a part of the body (AV/KJV1769).

If Jesus considered each of us as a part of him then each of us must then consider each other a part of ourselves and of great importance to him.

Let's think further. When Jesus saw the man with the withered hand he could have simply tried to cheer him up by saying, “Listen, be encouraged, you still have the use of the other hand and your legs are fine. Things could be worse.” After all Jesus was being threatened by people in authority. His life was in danger. Why push the envelope! No, Jesus committed himself, his life, to saving each member of the body. Each of us is of infinite value to him.

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Let's recap:

1. Firstly, Jesus is our *Doctor, our Savior and Head*.
2. Secondly, Jesus' *friends* and bride find their *orientation* and reason for existence in Him.
3. Thirdly, Jesus asserts his lordship and care for our *needs* as his body. He demonstrates the *spirit* of the law of God.
4. Fourthly, Jesus risks his very life for *each member* of the body.

Questions to aid in the study of this section Mark 2:13-3:6

1. What was one of the mistakes the Pharisees made in their thinking towards the Publicans? 2:13-17
2. Draw up a list of people and things most important to you. On this list who is the most important of all? 2:18-22
3. God has given many things to mankind, amongst them, the law, the temple, sacrifices, the Bible, spiritual leaders, the prophets, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles. Why did He give these things? Are they for our good or evil? Please explain. 2:23-27
4. Jesus could have told the man with the withered hand whom He healed on the Sabbath, to come another day. Why didn't he do that? 3:1-6
5. Why did the religious leaders of the people react so sharply when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand? 3:1-6