

Mark Chapter 3

Verses 1-6:

Jesus' power continues to be manifest, this time causing strong negative reaction.

This is the last of the 5 conflict episodes which began (in 2:1; 2:1-11; 13-17; 18-22; 23-28), and as such it gives a sense of climax to the growing antagonism that is between Jesus and all of the Jewish leaders.

In this encounter, Jesus gave the Pharisees a living illustration of scriptural Sabbath observance and His sovereign authority over both man and the Sabbath.

Mark 3:1 "And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand."

“Synagogue”:

The Jews' local places of assembly and worship (see notes on 1:21).

“Withered hand”:

This is describing a condition of paralysis or deformity from an accident, a disease, or some congenital defect.

Jesus was critical of certain aspects of the Jewish religion of His time, but He remained faithful in weekly synagogue attendance.

(In Luke 6: 6), we read that this withered hand, was the man's right hand and it probably kept him from making a living for himself and his family.

It seems that Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath when He was near enough to attend.

Mark 3:2 "And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day; that they might accuse him."

“Accuse:”

The Pharisees were not open to learning from Jesus, but only looked for an opportunity to charge Him with a violation of the Sabbath, and accusation they could bring before the Sanhedrin.

Sabbath regulations were extraordinarily detailed and often legalistic.

Sabbath issues become a major battle ground for Jesus and His detractors.

We see here, that the scribes and Pharisees were following Jesus around so that they might find Him doing something that they could complain about.

The Sabbath day was their favorite time, because anything that could be thought of as labor on that day was against the Mosaic Law.

Perhaps their jealousy of His ability to heal and deliver the oppressed drove them to this.

At any rate, they watched His every move so that they could find fault.

Mark 3:3 "And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth."

Jesus would not let these scribes intimidate Him.

When He saw the man in need, He boldly told him to come to Him.

It made no difference that these scribes were looking on.

Mark 3:4 "And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace."

Jesus countered the Pharisees with a question that elevated the issue at hand from a legal to a moral problem.

“Is it lawful”:

A reference to the Mosaic Law.

Jesus was forcing the Pharisees to examine their tradition regarding the Sabbath to see if it was consistent with God’s Old Testament law.

“To do good ... evil ... save ... kill”:

Christ now has used a device common in the Middle East, He framed the issue in terms of clear-cut extremes.

The obvious implication is that failure to do good or save a life was wrong and not in keeping with God’s original intention for the Sabbath (see notes on 2:27; Matt. 12:10).

“But they held their peace”:

The Pharisees refused to answer Jesus’ question, and by so doing implied that their Sabbath views and practices were false.

Based on the Old Testament alone, the answer would obviously be “to do good,” even if it was on the Sabbath.

But religious tradition had added greatly to the Old Testament, in essence setting the Scripture aside for the sake of human rules (see 7:7).

Jesus did not wait for them to say something.

He asked them a question that they could not answer.

There was no way to criticize what He was doing when He put it this way.

If they answered at all, they would have to agree that it was good to do good and to save life.

He only gave them two choices.

So that they would not agree with what He was doing, they just didn't answer at all.

Mark 3:5 "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched [it] out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."

“Anger”:

Definite displeasure with human sin reveals a healthy, moral nature.

Jesus’ reaction was consistent with His divine nature and proved that He was the righteous Son of God.

This kind of holy indignation with sinful attitudes and practices was to be more fully demonstrated when Jesus cleansed the temple (11:15-18; Matt. 2:12; Luke 19:45-48).

“The hardness of their hearts”:

This phrase refers to an inability to understand because of a rebellious attitude (Psalm 95:8; and Hebrew 3:8, 15).

The Pharisees’ hearts were becoming more and more obstinate and unresponsive to the truth (16:14; Rom. 9:18).

Jesus again expresses strong displeasure (see 1:43.)

But along with a certain anger comes “being grieved,” connoting not censure but compassion.

We see here, that Jesus had no patience with those who were constantly finding fault with those who were trying to do good.

He could look right into their hearts, and He didn't like what He saw.

Their hearts were so hardened that they did not have any compassion on anyone who could not help themselves.

Jesus was grieved so deeply that the people of the church (who should be seeking to do good), were just like the world and didn't care for the needy around them.

He openly defied those cold hearted scribes and Pharisees and healed the man's hand right in front of them, Sabbath or not.

Notice that Jesus told the man to do something: to extend his hand.

As an act of faith, he had to extend his hand showing that he believed it would be restored.

Faith is important in receiving healing.

Mark 3:6 "And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him."

“The Pharisees ... took counsel”:

They absolutely refused to be persuaded by anything Jesus said and did (John 3:19), but instead were determined to kill Him.

The Greek word for “conspiring” includes the notion of carrying out a decision already made, the Pharisees were simply discussing how to implement theirs.

“Herodians”:

This secular political party, which took its name from Herod Antipas and was strong in its support for Rome, opposed the Pharisees on nearly every issue.

But were willing to join forces with them because both desperately wanted to destroy Jesus (see note on Matt. 22:16).

The “Pharisees” were in Jesus’ time the most influential Jewish sect.

Some, like Nicodemus in (John 3), gave Jesus a hearing.

But many, perhaps most, were more zealous for their somewhat arbitrary rules than for the spirit of the Old Testament and for a personal relationship to God.

Subservience to a man-made code of ethics worked a spiritually deadly result.

The Pharisees appear to have been at the vanguard of attempts to discredit Jesus.

They are joined here by the Herodians.

This group, much smaller than the Pharisees, tended toward political opportunism.

They would have perceived Jesus as a threat to the status quo of Roman rule, which then benefited them.

It seems these Herodians and Pharisees (who had been enemies in the past), had now joined forces to oppose Jesus together.

Jesus really did no physical labor when he healed this man with the withered hand.

He spoke, and this man was restored anew.

Now, these jealous church leaders of that day were looking for some way to stop Jesus, because He was showing the weakness in their ministry.

Mark 3:7 "But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea,"

We see here, that Jesus had been away from Capernaum at an interior city.

The Herodians were more prominent in the interior where Herod's headquarters were.

The word had been spread about Jesus' miracles, and this multitude had gathered from many miles around.

Jesus had returned again to the sea of Galilee where, you remember, Peter had a home.

Mark 3:8 "And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and [from] beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him."

In spite of His conflicts with the Pharisees, Jesus remained very popular with the all of the ordinary people.

Mark is the only gospel writer who at this point in Jesus' ministry noted that the masses came from all parts of Palestine to see and hear Him.

“Idumea”:

An area southeast of Judea mentioned only here in the New Testament and populated by many Edomites (originally descendants of Esau).

By this time, it had become mostly Jewish in population and was considered a part of Judea.

“Beyond Jordan”:

The region east of the Jordan River, also called Perea, and ruled by Herod Antipas.

Its population contained a large number of Jews.

“Tyre and Sidon”:

Two Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean coast, north of Galilee.

Phoenicia as a whole was often designated by these cities (Jer. 47:4; Joel 3:4; Matthew 11:21; Acts 12:20).

I really believe the reason these two paragraphs were separated was to show that a multitude came from Galilee and Judea, and another multitude came from Tyre, and Sidon and, Jerusalem and all those cities listed in verse eight.

Mark 3:9 "And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him."

We see here, that there were so many people that Jesus had a small boat to stand by in readiness in the chance that these people would press on Him so greatly that it would overwhelm Him.

He could minister from the boat if necessary.

Mark 3:10 "For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues."

“Plaques”:

Literally “a whip, a lash,” sometimes translated “plagues,” or “scourges.”

This metaphorically describes various painful, agonizing, physical ailments and illnesses.

We have discussed before how just touching Jesus' garment could heal as it did the woman with the issue of blood.

Virtue went out from Jesus to the person healed each time.

You can easily see how this could be so tiring, even for the Son of God.

Mark 3:11 "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God."

“Unclean spirits”:

This refers to demons (see note on 1:23; Luke 4:41).

“Saw him”:

The tense of the Greek verb means there were many times when demons looked at Jesus and contemplated the truth of His character and identity.

“Thou art the Son of God” (1:24).

The demons unhesitatingly affirmed the uniqueness of Jesus’ nature, which Mark saw as clear proof of Jesus’ deity.

We also have mentioned before, that the reason these unclean demon spirits recognized Jesus, was because they had been in heaven with Jesus before they made the terrible mistake of following Lucifer.

They had been angels; but when they decided to follow Lucifer, they became demons (meaning evil spirits).

Notice that even evil spirits are subject to Jesus, and must bow.

Mark 3:12 "And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known."

“They should not make him known”:

Jesus always rebuked demons for their testimonies about Him.

He wanted His teaching and actions, not the impure words of demons, to proclaim who He was (see note on 1:25; Acts 16:16-18).

Jesus seeks to keep His messianic identity somewhat hidden. See 1:34, 44.

This was not totally possible, nor always desirable (John 4:26).

But it seems to have been Jesus’ general policy not to prejudice the masses unduly in His favor, as easy as this would have been.

He sought the earnest commitment of true seekers for the living God, not merely hangers-on attaching themselves to a new and popular leader.

We see here, that Jesus did not want these people to follow Him because of the miracles or even because of these spirits telling them who He is.

He wanted the message of grace to win them.

Mark 3:13 "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth [unto him] whom he would: and they came unto him."

“Calleth unto him whom he would”:

The Greek verb “summoned” stresses that Jesus acted in His own sovereign interest when He chose the 12 disciples (John 15:16).

Jesus removed Himself from the masses of curiosity seekers and just called the ones to Him in the mountain whom He would.

Unless the Holy Spirit draws the person, they will never come to God.

It is God's will, however, that all of us come.

In this case, He was calling the disciples.

Verses 14-15:

The “twelve” doubtless represent in some new form the nation Israel with its 12 tribes.

They have three functions: to be with Him (See Acts 1:21; 4:13), to be sent out to preach, and to share Jesus’ uncanny mastery over physical and spiritual disorder.

Mark 3:14 "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,"

“Ordained twelve”:

Christ, by an explicit act of His will, formed a distinct group of 12 men who were among His followers (see note on Matt. 10:1).

This new group constituted the foundation of His church (Eph. 2:20).

Mark 3:15 "And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:"

“Have power”:

This word is sometimes rendered “authority”.

Along with the main task of preaching, Jesus gave the 12 the right to expel demons (Luke 9:1).

This "ordained" carries much more power than what we think of as ordaining today.

This means empowers to preach, heal and cast out devils.

These men had not been in school training.

This is a little like Jeremiah's call to minister.

Jeremiah, as these 12 apostles, was not trained by the world to take over his job.

Jesus touched them and prayed over each of them, and His virtue flowed into these disciples.

They were really just an extension of Him.

They preached in His name, they healed in His name; they cast out demons in His name.

The power was in His name.

Just as God touched Jeremiah's lips and put the words in Jeremiah's mouth, Jesus touched the disciples and empowered them to minister.

Verses 16-19:

For a list of the 12 (see notes on Matt 10:2-4).

Mark 3:16 "And Simon he surnamed Peter;"

“Peter”:

From this point on (except in 14:37), Mark uses this name for Simon, though this is not when the designation was first given (John 1:42).

Nor does it mark the complete replacement of the name Simon (Acts 15:14).

The name means “stone,” and describes Peter’s character and activities, namely his position as a foundation rock in the building of the church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20).

Mark 3:17 "And James the [son] of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:"

“Sons of thunder”:

Mark defines the Aramaic term “Boanerges” for his Gentile readers.

This name for the two brothers probably referred to their intense, outspoken personalities (compare 9:38; Luke 9:54).

Mark 3:18 "And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the [son] of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite,"

“Thaddeus”:

The only name that is not the same in all the New Testament lists of the 12 (Matt. 10:24; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13).

Luke and Acts call him “Judas the son of James,” and John 14:22 refers to him as “Judas (not Iscariot).”

Mark 3:19 "And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into a house."

“Iscariot”:

This Hebrew term means “man of Kerioth,” as in Kerioth-hezron, which is south of Hebron (see Joshua 15:25).

We see here the chosen twelve.

"Peter" means a rock.

The Lord giving James and John this name "Boanerges" indicated that Jesus knew they both had the zeal and power to fulfill the great work He had for them to do.

John, who is my favorite penman, was very bold in announcing Jesus as the Word and God.

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

This was also, the same John who was banished to the Isle of Patmos for speaking out so boldly for Christ.

So many people wonder why Jesus chose Judas Iscariot.

Jesus knew someone had to betray Him.

He was obedient to the will of the Father even in choosing Judas as a disciple.

Mark Chapter 3 Questions

1. Where did Jesus encounter the man with the withered hand?
2. Which hand was withered?
3. Why is this important?
4. Who watched Jesus constantly?

5. Why were they watching this closely?
6. What was, probably, their problem?
7. What were the first two words Jesus said to the man?
8. What question did Jesus ask the scribes that they could not answer without trapping themselves?
9. What feeling did Jesus have toward these scribes?
10. Why was Jesus' heart grieved?
11. What did the man with the withered hand have to do to be restored?
12. What one word shows what we must have to be healed?
13. These Pharisees joined in with their unusual enemies against Jesus. Who were they?
14. Where did Jesus withdraw to?
15. Where did the multitudes come from to throng Jesus?
16. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do to insure Him from being thronged?
17. Why did they want to touch Him?
18. What did the unclean spirits do when they saw Jesus?
19. How did they know Him?
20. What did Jesus tell these evil spirits to do?
21. When Jesus went to the mountain, who came to Him?
22. How many did Jesus ordain?
23. What does the word "ordain" really mean here?
24. What was Jesus ordaining them to do?
25. How were they able to do all these things God had called them to do?
26. What other name did He give Simon?
27. What does it mean?

28. The name Boanerges that He gave James and John showed what about their personalities?
29. Why did Jesus choose Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve?
30. Which is your favorite disciple? Explain.