

The Son of Man



Mark 3:1-19

By Scott Huckaby

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Last week, Bo shared a message with us from Mark Chapter 2 which concluded with Jesus being confronted by the Pharisees because his disciples were gleaning grain on the Sabbath. That encounter set the stage for Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath at the beginning of Chapter 3 that we'll look at this morning.

- The Gospels record Jesus healing people on the Sabbath 7 different times... You think He's trying to tell us something?
- Jesus made it very clear there was a big difference between the Pharisees & God's way of Sabbath keeping.
- The Pharisees tried to keep the letter of the Law while totally missing the spirit of the Law.

At the end of Chapter 2, Jesus referred to himself as the "Lord of the Sabbath." In this title, Jesus proclaimed that He is the One who exercises authority even over the rules governing the Sabbath day. This was a claim of deity... certainly, it was God who gave the Law to Moses.

The Pharisees concocted a myriad of rules defining what they thought it meant to keep the Sabbath holy. They believed the Law had been given so that people could earn favor with God by keeping it. That is salvation by works.

The whole point of the Law was to bring us to the realization that we are incapable of meeting God's standard on our own, that if we are to be saved, we need to turn to Him for His mercy...

Galatians 3:24 – *the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

People during Old Testament times were saved the same way we are saved today: by the grace of God through faith in His provision for forgiveness of sins.

- We have the benefit today of knowing that God's provision was Jesus the Messiah paying our sin penalty when He died on the cross.
- Old Testament saints knew their salvation would have something to do with the Messiah but they didn't know the details.
- Their faith was in God that He would provide the way for them to be saved and they demonstrated their faith by doing their best to follow the Law.

This Old Testament saving faith was demonstrated by Abraham when he obeyed God to take Isaac, his son of promise, to be sacrificed on a mountain in the land of Moriah. When Isaac questioned his dad about there not being a lamb for the burnt offering, *Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering"* (Genesis 22:8).

- Abraham knew he'd have descendants through Isaac because the God who never lies promised him that.
- Abraham did not know how this would play out but was prepared to go through with sacrificing his son expecting God to raise Isaac from the dead if necessary.

We are not under the Law of Moses today but we study it because it reveals the mind of God. There are principles in the Law that we can apply to our lives to please God.

- We don't seek to please God to earn His favor for salvation but out of gratitude for His saving us.

The principle of the Sabbath that we should apply today is to set aside a special day to take a break from our usual earning-a-living activities. Often this break enables us to spend more time with family and friends, and give more honor to God than a regular day.

- It is to our benefit to take time for reflection and rejuvenation.
- Our sabbath day does not have to be on a Saturday or a Sunday, but it is always better when we can observe it collectively with fellow Christians.
- And keeping the Sabbath holy doesn't mean we cease from doing anything as the Pharisees would have us do. Sometimes the best way to rejuvenate is through activities radically different from our week-day work.

Jesus made it clear that the principle of keeping the Sabbath holy was for our benefit: *"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:27).

Besides claiming to be the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus also used the title *Son of Man* for Himself at the end of Chapter 2. This was Jesus' favorite term for Himself in this early stage of His ministry.

- Indeed, Jesus is referred to as the *Son of Man* in the New Testament 88 times.

- Chapter 3 sheds some light on why Jesus favored being referred to as *the Son of Man*.

The term *Son of Man* highlights Jesus' humanity. Other titles such as Son of God, underscores His deity. The Jews understood the phrase "son of" to mean "same as." So the term *Son of Man* is simply another way of saying "man" or "human" and thus focuses us on the humanity of Christ.

God called the prophet Ezekiel "son of man" 93 times. The term in this case contrasted the human condition of Ezekiel to the matchless majesty of God. While Ezekiel was a son of man, Jesus was "*the Son of Man*" (the definite article "the" only applying to Jesus).

The term *Son of Man* is also a title of humility. The Second Person of the Trinity, eternal in nature, left heaven's glory and took on human flesh, becoming *the Son of Man*, born of a virgin as prophesied. This intentional lowering of His status from King of Heaven to Son of Man is the epitome of humility...

Philippians 2:5-8 – *Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

I remember sharing that passage with a coworker on a plane once. He had recently started going to church and we were discussing various spiritual matters. He told me he didn't think that the Bible revealed the deity of Jesus so I pulled out my pocket New Testament and read that Philippians passage to him. He snatched my Bible out of my hands to read the passage for himself. We only had flip-phones back in those days so I don't think reading from a Bible app would have been nearly as dramatic.

- It is a real blessing to play a part in helping someone else grow in their understanding of our Savior.

The term *Son of Man* is also a veiled reference to the Messiah in light of Daniel 7:13-14. Only those familiar with the Daniel prophecy would make the connection that Jesus was calling himself the Messiah. And by referring to Himself as the Messiah, this was also a claim of deity.

- It is somewhat veiled in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be God in the flesh; but that is what the name *Immanuel* in Isaiah 7:14 means, *God with us*.
- And if that wasn't clear enough, Isaiah 9:6 calls the Messiah *Mighty God*.

Alright, with this introduction, let's look at the first part of Chapter 3...

Mark 3:1-6 – The Lord of the Sabbath heals on the Sabbath.

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.

It is interesting to notice that the critics of Jesus *expected* Him to heal this man with the withered hand. By their expectation, they admitted that Jesus had the power of God to work miracles. They knew what Jesus could do, yet their knowledge didn't draw them to Jesus.

- It was as if a man could fly, but the authorities wanted to know if he had a pilot's license.
- The religious leaders knew *about* Jesus, but they did not know Him.

Jesus asked the religious leaders: *Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good?* In His question, Jesus emphasized this truth about the Sabbath: there is never a *wrong* day to do something *truly good*.

- According to their Sabbath traditions, if you cut your finger, you could stop the bleeding — but you could not put ointment on the cut. You could stop it from getting worse, but you weren't allowed to make it better.

It is instructive that the Pharisees didn't answer Jesus. They were there to catch Him doing something they could use against Him, not to be challenged by Him. This is classic Jesus... getting right to the crux of the issue by asking penetrating questions. And he wasn't alone with the Pharisees, asking such revealing questions was aimed as much at the audience and us by extension than it was the religious leaders.

It says here that Jesus *looked around them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts*: This is one of the few places where Jesus is described as having **anger**. What angered Him was the **hardness** of men's hearts.

This was a perfect opportunity for His critics to change their minds about Him and their traditions. But they refused, rejecting Him instead.

- Jesus deliberately healed on the Sabbath to provoke a response. He *could* have done this the next day or even privately. But He chose this time and place to expose the false doctrine of the Pharisees.

Jesus commanded the man with the withered hand to do something impossible — to move his paralyzed hand. But as the man put forth effort, God did the rest.

- Notice here that the miracles of Jesus generally involved a step of faith on the part of the beneficiaries.
- The man had to believe Jesus would heal him or he wouldn't have bothered to stretch out his hand.

God brings miracles in our lives all the time but we usually need to take the step of faith the Holy Spirit is convicting us about in order to realize those miracles.

On the subject of miracles, I had a recent conversation with an unbeliever who mentioned he had a problem with the magic associated with Jesus. I asked him, you mean the miracles? Yes, he confirmed that was what he was referring to...

- as an unbeliever who thinks this physical universe is all there is, he had no concept of a Creator who could suspend His own laws of nature to reveal Himself.

That is why Jesus performed miracles; to show that He was God's Anointed, the Messiah. It was the healing miracles in particular that revealed He was the Messiah...

Isaiah 35:5-6 – Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.

The Pharisees saw in Jesus healing on the Sabbath what they wanted to see. Jesus was defying their authority as religious leaders and so they plotted with the Herodians to destroy Him. The Herodians were Jews who supported the rule of King Herod who had been appointed by Rome. So here we see the beginning of the conspiracy to send Jesus to the cross.

Mark 3:7-12 – Multitudes come to Jesus.

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.

The crowds came to Jesus near the Sea of Galilee from distant places. Yet it seems that this crowd was attracted to Jesus more because of His miraculous works than because of His message. They were there because *they heard how many things He was doing.*

- These people were effectively just miracle groupies... they were there for the free lunch or to see the sensational spectacle of people being healed...
- For most, seeing miracles was just entertainment (they didn't have the kind of digital distractions we have today).
- It is wonderful for people to be attracted to Jesus. But if their focus is on *what He can do for them* instead of *Who He is*, they will not follow Him for long.
- Jesus knew this but persisted for the sake of those few who would respond to His message.
- And also, for the sake of His disciples whom He was training to spread the gospel after he was gone.

It is interesting to notice that demons, called *unclean spirits* here recognized Jesus for who He was calling Him *the Son of God*. Certainly, the demons recognized Him because they had visibility into the spiritual realm.

Demons are fallen angels... spirit beings who followed Satan in rebelling against God. Some make a distinction between demons and fallen angels but they have to appeal to extrabiblical texts to make that case.

Most people in our culture today don't even think demons are real. That is because the dominant philosophy of our culture is Naturalism... the belief that this physical universe is all there is. So, to encourage that perspective, demons keep a fairly low profile today. They are nonetheless working behind the scenes trying to keep people from turning to Jesus or tempting us to turn away from Him... spiritual warfare is real!

- Despite their low profile, demons are very real as anyone who has dabbled in the occult have testified.
- None of us should have to test those waters ourselves, God in His Word forbids attempting to make contact with the spirit world for good reason.

Jesus rebuked the demons warning them not to refer to Him as the *Son of God*.

- One of the commentaries I use said this is because knowing the name of someone “confers mastery over” them. But that explanation is weak; there is no way demons could have mastery over their Creator.
- I think Jesus didn’t want this term applied to Him for the same reason He referred to Himself as *the Son of Man*. The timing wasn’t right for the masses to recognize Him as the Messiah, He wanted only His closest followers and the spiritually discerning to know this.

Jesus also knew that most people had the wrong expectation about the Messiah. As Moses delivered the Israelites from the tyranny of Egypt, the Jews were looking for a Messiah that would deliver them from the tyranny of the current Gentile government ruling over them (which was Rome).

- The Messiah will indeed deliver Israel from the Times of the Gentiles when He returns...
- But the Jews were totally forgetting the “suffering Servant” passages which prophesied of the Messiah’s first coming into our world.

Mark 3:13-15 – Jesus chooses the twelve.

And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

At this time Jesus was at a critical point in His ministry. Luke 6:12 says He spent a whole night in prayer before choosing His 12 disciples.

- Jesus had offended the traditions of the religious leadership, and they plotted His destruction.
- Great crowds followed Him, but they were not interested in spiritual things and could be quickly turned against Jesus.
- His response to all of this was to pray and choose leaders to train.

Jesus appointed 12 men who would carry on what He started; without them the work of Jesus would never extend throughout the whole world.

- A disciple was a student, but not in a classroom and lecture sense. A disciple learned by being with and hearing from their master.
- A disciple was effectively an *apprentice* and learned from the master firsthand.

Jesus appointed the 12 **that they might be with Him**. The first job of the disciples was simply to **be with** Jesus, to learn from being around Him.

- Then, in a secondary sense He chose them **that He might send them out to preach**.
- A preacher will only be as useful to Jesus to the extent that He has “been with” Jesus. There is little eternal value in those who preach without having a real, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

When someone has *been with* Jesus, and is *sent out* to serve Him, they can expect that Jesus will give them the **power** to serve Him, including the power to see miraculous works (**heal sicknesses and to cast our demons**) done in their midst.

I asked myself: why 12 disciples? Every detail in Scripture has significance. The number 12 is used a lot in the Bible and a study of it reveals that 12 is the number for Government by Divine Appointment.

- Matthew 19:28 describes 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel.
- God worked through the 12 tribes of Israel and, when Israel rejected Him as the Messiah, He instituted the church to be His representatives on earth with the foundation laid by the 12 original disciples.
- God is not done with Israel by the way... His promises to Israel will be fulfilled and we are seeing the stage being set for that today.

Mark 3:16-19 – The twelve disciples listed.

Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, “Sons of Thunder”; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

We do not know very much about these 12 men from Scripture other than what is revealed about Peter, James, John, Matthew and Judas. But of the other 7, we mostly just know their names. Their fame is reserved for heaven, where their names are on the 12 foundations of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14).

- For the most part, the original disciples were not “famous” in the sense that we think of fame in our culture. We must learn to value and respect *heaven’s* fame, not worldly fame.

There are many interesting connections with this group. There are brothers (**James** and **John**, **Peter** and **Andrew**); there were business associates (**Peter**, **James**, and **John** were all fishermen); and political opponents (**Matthew**, the Roman-collaborating tax collector, and **Simon**, the Roman-opposing zealot); and then there is the one who would betray Jesus (**Judas Iscariot**).

Mark gives a “note for the Gentiles” by translating **Boanerges** — which means **Sons of Thunder** and is probably a reference to the fiery disposition of James and John (as seen in Luke 9:54).

The term **Canaanite** has nothing to do with geography. It is the Hebrew word for “zealous,” identifying Simon as a member of the radical, anti-Roman Zealot party.

- Simon might have one of those who wanted to make Israel great again.

The Bible sometimes uses different names for the 12 disciples. Simon was given the name Peter by Jesus. We know Levi was later called Matthew, Bartholomew (was called Nathanael in John 1:45, and Thaddaeus (was also called Judas, son of James in John 14:22).

Judas’ surname of Iscariot probably indicates that he was from Kerioth in Judah. He apparently was the only Judean among the twelve disciples.

The choice of Judas was just as important as the choice of any of the other disciples... but many people wonder why Jesus choose one who would betray him.

- It wasn’t because Jesus didn’t know how he would turn out. Jesus told His disciples that He chose them and knew one of them was a devil.
- It wasn’t because He had no others to choose. He could raise up followers from stones, so He could easily have found someone else.
- It wasn’t because He wanted a scandalous person, or a “bad boy” — we read of no scandal surrounding Judas during Jesus’ ministry. The other disciples did far more stupid things during their three years with Jesus.

It was certainly prophesied that the Messiah would be betrayed in Job 19:19 and...

Psalm 41:9 – *Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*

Also, Zechariah 11:12-13 gives the details of that betrayal indicating that the Messiah would be given-up for 30 pieces of silver.

This brings up one of the objections to Jesus fulfilling prophecy voiced by my unbelieving brother: that the prophecies Jesus fulfilled were self-fulfilling. In other words, Jesus knew the prophecies and made decisions that would result in the prophecies being fulfilled.

- Well, this could have been the case in some instances but there were plenty of other prophecies Jesus fulfilled that had nothing to do with His human choices; such as where He would be born, and from which tribe, that He would be born of a virgin, and that He would rise from the dead.

If someone does not want to believe in God, they’ll find all kinds of reasons not to believe.

I find it amazing that so many people reject Jesus as the Savior despite all the evidence that He is. Of course, most of that evidence is found in God’s Word, the Bible. But our faith in God’s Word is not blind faith as unbelievers think... God has authenticated that the Bible accurately reflects His Word.

How do we know the Bible really is from God?

- All the manuscripts that reveal only insignificant differences
- The absence of any contradictions between 40 different writers over 1500 years
- Archeological proof of the historical accuracy of the Scriptures
- The scientific accuracy of the Scriptures (unless you consider the theory of evolution as science)
- All the prophecies that have been or are about to be fulfilled (only God can declare the end from the beginning)
- The wisdom & principles in Scripture really do work
- The testimonies of those whose lives have been changed as a result of God’s Word.

Alright, what applications or other observations do you see from our look at the first 19 verses in Mark 3 today?

- God wants us to know Him; that is why Jesus came to reveal the Father to us and make the way for us to have our sins forgiven in order to spend eternity with Him.
- Jesus is the unique Son of Man; the only one who could pay our sin debt by dying for us on the cross.