

### Lessons from Jesus Ministry in Mark 3

By Dave DeWitt

**1. Jesus and the Sabbath Controversy:** Jesus entered a synagogue, probably the one in Capernaum, on a Sabbath day, and there was a man there with a crippled hand. The Pharisees were watching so they could accuse Him of violating the Sabbath. Jesus asked them, *“Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?”* (v. 4). The Mosaic Law said they had to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12), but it said nothing about meeting in synagogues on the Sabbath. There was only one *place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come* (Deuteronomy 12:5). And when the temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem, that was the only designated place of worship. *“I will fill this house with glory,” says the LORD of hosts* (Haggai 2:1-7).

#### **Lesson—Morality should not be defined religiously**

Morality is not about mechanical acts. But here we see that religion itself can prevent morality. By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus placed compassion for a crippled man over keeping the Sabbath in the synagogue. This went right to the heart of conservative Jewish morality. Jesus asked the question: What is good? *“Is it lawful [is it according to the Mosaic Law] to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?”* This assumes what He did [being *lawful*] was saving people and what they were doing, while keeping the Sabbath traditions in their synagogues, was killing people.

**2. Plotting Against Jesus:** When Jesus healed the man, *the Pharisees went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodian’s against Him, as to how they might destroy Him* (v. 6). The Pharisees disagreed with the Herodian’s politically because the Herodian’s were loyal to Herod and Rome, and the Pharisees wanted independence from both. But the Pharisees hated Jesus more than they hated the Herodian’s, because Jesus challenged their power derived through their oral traditions and applied in their synagogues. **So the enemy of their enemy became their friends.**

#### **Lesson—Following Jesus will result in rejection from religious authorities**

It is a certainty, not just a possibility, if you follow Jesus there will be leaders of “Christianity” who will not approve of you. You can be certain that if all the established Christian leaders you know believe that you are a good guy or gal, you are doing something less than following Jesus. In Jesus’ day, that was because of the traditional conservatism in the synagogues. Today, in the western part of the world, it’s because many of our leaders have abandoned biblical standards in order to be “relevant” so they can keep people coming to their meetings. **But in both cases, it’s because if you follow Jesus you will be a threat to the “success” of the religious leadership.**

**3. Jesus’ Role in His Family:** Jesus’ *mother and His brothers* thought He was crazy and tried an intervention to take Him captive. Apparently, they couldn’t get to Him, so *they sent word to Him and called Him*. We should note:

- (1) Mary’s husband Joseph is not mentioned, possibly he had died.
- (2) Jesus had brothers who were connected to Mary. The most obvious way to understand this was that Mary was not a perpetual virgin (4 brothers named in 6:3).
- (3) Jesus never gave special significance to His mother, and defined His family as His disciples spiritually rather than biologically. **The Christianity of Christ and the apostles did not seem to prioritize the family.** *“For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother... sister...mother.”*

#### **Lesson—You cannot follow Jesus and put your family first**

Being a Jew in Israel was all about family. Israelites related to God through their genealogical tie to Abraham. But in the church, we relate to God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Social order is established through families in all ages, including our church/grace age. Also, our families are among those *allotted to your charge* (1 Peter 5:3). But the apostles called their fellow believers brothers and sisters and their disciples their true children. Whereas the Old Testament is filled with genealogical information, we don’t know anything about the apostles’ wives except that they traveled with them (1 Corinthians 9:5). Nor do we hear anything about their biological children. **The church is a band of brothers and sisters in Christ where the more mature serve the less mature.**