



Study 3: Jesus—The Non-Religious Man

Mark 2:13-3:6

Personal Preparation 1

Thinking back to last week's study – can you remember the event that caused certain people to be offended by Jesus? Well in the section of Mark we're looking at this week, we see that Jesus causes offence again and again and again! The sad thing is, while we've already discovered that the coming of Jesus is 'good news' – the gospel, 1:1, 14-15, there are those who unfortunately only see Jesus as bad news. Why do people reject Jesus? That's what we're going to discover. **Read Mark 2:13-17.**

1. With what happens in 2:13-14 – what is similar here to what we've already seen in chapter 1?

2. What does this say about Jesus?

A note on **tax collectors**: Levi probably worked for the Jewish King, Herod Antipas. Levi would have collected tolls, tariffs and customs as people travelled from one territory of Palestine to another. Toll collectors were renowned for their dishonesty and extortion. It wouldn't have helped either that he worked for the royal Herodian family who were backed by the Romans and disliked by most ordinary Jews.

A note on **Pharisees**: Pharisees means "the separated ones". They were not the employed temple staff but a group of people concerned for the moral and religious well-being of the nation of Israel. We shouldn't think of the Pharisees only in negative terms. Some were wise, devout men, and they certainly had the respect of the Jewish people. Their concern was to bring ritual purity into the lives of ordinary Jews. It was essential to their sense of identity as Jews, to be able to know and determine what was permissible or not, clean or unclean.

3. How does the Pharisee react to the dinner party Jesus holds at his house? Why do you think he and the other Pharisees respond that way?

4. What do you think Jesus' response [v17] means?

5. With Jesus arriving on the scene, the long awaited kingdom of God is at hand. In the Old Testament, the coming of the kingdom was sometimes described as a great feast for all people. See Isaiah 25:6. Jesus is giving us a picture of this. But what is surprising about the priorities and concerns of God's kingdom?

For Today: Do you think you ever play the part of a Pharisee and think certain people in your life are unsuitable for God's kingdom? What can you do to build relationships and so give the opportunity for Jesus, the great doctor, to do his healing work in them?

thoughts. questions. insights

Personal Preparation 2

Jesus is the Non-Religious Man. Jesus isn't interested in meeting the concerns and expectations of the Jewish religious hierarchy. He's got a totally different agenda. He is the Christ. He's at the centre of God's kingdom. And he wants people to respond to him. In the previous Personal Preparation, the clash between Jesus and the religious hierarchy was about the company that Jesus keeps. This time the conflict centres on the issue of fasting. **Read Mark 2:18-22.**

1. Who are those who are surprised that Jesus' disciples do not fast?
2. What is the illustration that Jesus uses to answer their question?
3. What is the point behind this illustration that Jesus uses?

Note: When we read of fasting in the bible, it seems that it's a practice that shows humility. Humility in the act of repentance – eg. 1 Kings 21:27-28. Humility in the act of prayer – eg. Ezra 8:21; Acts 14:23. But most commonly it is an act of humility and lowliness in a time of mourning – eg. 1 Chronicles 10:11-12; Ezra 10:6; Psalm 35:13-14.

4. **Read Isaiah 61:10-62:5** which uses the illustration of a wedding to portray the future time when God's rule will be established on the earth and Israel's glory will be restored. How does Isaiah 61 give meaning to Jesus' words about the non-necessity of fasting?

5. Jesus gives two more illustrations to explain why this is not the time for his disciples to fast (v21-22). What do you think is the point of these illustrations?

For Today: How does Jesus' coming shed light on the time that we live in? For Christian people today, is it a time of joy or mourning?

thoughts. questions. insights

Jesus: The Non-Religious Man, Group Discussion Questions

As we've worked our way through this part of Mark's gospel, we've seen that Jesus has come into conflict again and again. Even the disciples of John the Baptist are unsettled by what Jesus does. It seems that Jesus does not fit any acceptable category of someone with divine credentials. Jesus is non-religious. And that pattern continues as we look at Jesus' attitude to the Sabbath. His identity and purpose goes way beyond any religious/ritual expectations that others have for him.

1. From Mark 2:1-22, what are the instances that have caused conflict?

2. What have we learnt about Jesus in the midst of all of this?
3. What have we learnt about the priorities and focus of the Kingdom of God in the midst of all of this?
4. What were the issues raised, questions posed or new insights you had as you read Mark 2:13-22 this week?

Read Mark 2:23-3:6

5. In the two separate events, what does Jesus do or Jesus' disciples do – that is against the Sabbath regulations?
6. In these two events, how does Jesus respond to his critics?
7. The Sabbath is commanded of his people, the nation of Israel eg. Exodus 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15. From Jesus' own words, how have the religious leaders distorted the purpose of the Sabbath?
8. Jesus will not be confined to the religious rules of the scribes and Pharisees. He is much bigger than their rules. But how in 2:25-28 does Jesus show that he is in fact bigger than the Old Testament law itself?
9. From Mark 1:1-3 and Mark 1:14-15 – we have discovered that Jesus is at the centre of Israel's long hoped for salvation – the time of their restoration and salvation. Jesus is bringing in the kingdom to set things right for the nation. So from 2:1-3:6 – what is so tragic about the reception that leaders of the nation give to Jesus?
10. As we think about telling people about Jesus, what can we say about Jesus from these verses?
11. Do you think at times the church has unfortunately acted like the Pharisees, and got caught up focussing on religious law and rules? If so, how?
12. Are there ways you have been challenged to live out kingdom values:
 - building friendships with 'sinful' people?
 - not letting religion control you, but only the Lord Jesus?

Pray

- Give thanks for Jesus – that he is the great physician who comes to the spiritually sick to bring forgiveness and salvation.
- Give thanks that Jesus is at the centre of the Kingdom of God – a kingdom of mercy, where Jesus himself is the Lord over our lives, not religious rules.
- Pray that _____ would come to know this kind, merciful Jesus for themselves. 