

*The Miracles of Jesus*  
Miracle # 9

**"Jesus Heals the Man With The Withered Hand"**  
(Matt 12:9-14, Mk. 3:1-6, Lk. 6:6-11)

Jesus has just healed the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. Now as He and his disciples pass through a field, they pick some grain on the Sabbath. This once again aroused the anger of the Pharisees. Although it must be noted that this is entirely permissible according to the law for one traveling to pluck enough heads of grain to satisfy his hunger.

As we have noted in the previous lesson in the time of Jesus, the Sabbath had become a tyranny with hundreds of rules and regulations which laid out in detail what a man might or might not do. The original Ten Commandments of God had been delineated into 613 laws; **248** positive (thou shalt's) and **365** negative (thou shalt not's). Jesus "discriminates between the spiritual principles of rest and the worship and service of God for which the day was dedicated, and the useless junk of endless hair-splitting distinctions and prohibitions of the Rabbis." [J.W. Shepard. "The Christ of the Gospel." (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939) p. 161]

Matthew 12:9-14

*"Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. (10) And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" —that they might accuse Him. (11) Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? (12) "Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (13) Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. (14) Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.*

Luke 6:6-11

*"Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. (7) So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. (8) But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood. (9) Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" (10) And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. (11) But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus."*

Mark 3:1-6

*"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. (2) So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. (3) And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step*

*forward." (4) 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. (5) 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. (6) Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him."*

## **The Background of the Miracle**

### Teaching in the Synagogue

Another Sabbath controversy arose when Jesus went into the local synagogue and was teaching. The synagogue service was different from what we are use to in the church. The services there were always characterized by a certain amount of informality. After the prayers were said and scripture had been read; then came an explanation of the scripture or sermon. No particular person had responsibility for speaking, any Rabbi or distinguished visitor could upon the invitation of the president or ruler of the synagogue deliver the message. After the message there was a time for discussion and argumentation. It is highly probable that it is part of the service that the miracle occurs.

In the congregation on this particular Sabbath was a man with a withered hand. Since the Pharisees and scribe were there hoping that Jesus would heal the man so they could accuse him, some have suggested that the scribes and Pharisees **arranged** for the man to be in the synagogue.

## **The Elements of the Miracle**

### The Man With The Withered Hand. (Mark 3:1)

The term "*withered*" is (**exerammenen** – Mark 3:1) in the original the word designates a condition of **recent** origins. The passive verb seems to indicate that the man was born with this handicap, but that it was later caused by some accident or injury. [The Complete Biblical Library. Mark. p. 69]

According to extra-biblical sources (The Gospel of Hebrews) the man states that he is a stone mason, and he asks Jesus to heal him that he could resume working, which lend credibility that this man hand could have been the result of an **injury**.

Luke is the only writer to point out it was the man's right hand. In the Jewish mind, the right hand was a symbol of power and strength. It was used for greetings and to bestow blessing. The right hand was the "clean hand" meaning a good Jew always ate with his right hand. The left hand was used for bodily functions. With apologies to all you who may be left handed, the left hand was considered the "unclean hand." Since this man's right hand was withered, he was handicapped physically and psychologically.

### The Anger of Jesus. (Mark 3:5)

*"And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts..."*

Jesus felt compassion for the man with the withered hand. But he was angered by the heartlessness and lack of compassion exhibited by the scribes and Pharisees.

One of the reasons that we have difficulty seeing Jesus being angry is because we associate anger with **sinfulness**. The truth is that anyone can get angry. The old as well as the young can be angry. The rich as well as the poor get angry. Everyone has the capacity for anger. In Psalms we are told to "**flee from anger**" but the Apostle Paul says,

"Be angry and sin not..." (Eph. 4:26). Jesus was angry but it was not sin because the **motive** behind His anger was right.

What made God (Jesus) angry?

1. When he saw the **right** being trampled under foot. (Isa 5:20-25)
2. When he saw God **law** being desecrated. (Ex 32:19-20)
3. When he saw God **house** being turned into a den of thieves. (Cleansing of the Temple)

In Matthew (12:11) he gives an illustration about a sheep in a pit that shows that doing good on the Sabbath is all right.

This brings up an interesting problem, by the time of the New Testament, there was such a perversion of human value, and **animals** were more valuable than people. Isn't it also true in our society, with its concern for "animal rights? We save spotted owl eggs but abort millions of babies each year.

I don't know if this man just caught Jesus' eye or if he did plead for mercy and healing as historical references suggest. But it is certain that Jesus was aware of the man's need as well as the scheme to accuse Him (Mark 3:2). Jesus could have healed privately to avoid this conflict but Jesus chose to face this issue head on.

## ***The Effects of the Miracle***

### *The Man is Healed*

He called for the man to step forward and by doing so determined to do everything **openly**. Jesus looked at his audience and was angered by their hardness of heart, he asked the question, *"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent.*"(Mark 6:4) He allowed that question to sink in. He is asking, **"What was the Sabbath for, to make men miserable or to be a blessing?"** The opponents of Jesus had no **answer** (Mark emphasizes that they were silent). Jesus then sensing their utter frustration, challenged them by looking directly at them (Mark 6:5), commanded the man to stretch out his life-less hand and when he did so he was healed.

The Pharisees were so concerned with obeying the letter of the law they had long since forgotten the **spirit** of the law.

The miraculous healing was like a giant exclamation point which said that Jesus was indeed the LORD of the Sabbath.

### *The Religious Leaders are Aroused*

I don't believe that Pharisees had any sense of guilt but they were very sensitive to shame and Jesus had shamed them publicly. The effect of the miracle was immediate for the Pharisees were *"filled with rage"* (Luke 6:11) which implies a **senseless** rage.

Although literally he does not lift so much as a finger to work and does not break the Sabbath, the leaders are enraged anyway and they get together with the Herodians (Mark 3:6) on the Sabbath to plot the murder of some one who has just done a good deed.

## Application

What does this tell us about keeping the Sabbath Today?

1. ***The Sabbath is not as important some people think.***

In the Old Testament, for Jesus and his disciples and for Jewish people today, the Sabbath was **Saturday** (actually Friday at **sundown** until Saturday at **sundown**).

Some groups like the Seventh-Day Adventist and the Seventh-Day Baptist, believe that Christians should observe **Saturday** as our day of worship. But for more than 2000 years, almost all Christians have observed Sunday, not Saturday, as the Lord's Day. Which brings us to another problem - some Christians treat Sunday as a Christian Sabbath? While some Christians believe Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, this is nowhere taught in the Word of God. Oddly enough those who claim that we should observe a strict Sabbath on Sunday are really contradicting themselves. The important thing is that we set aside time for rest and worship.

(Col. 2:16-17)

"So don't put up with anyone pressuring you in details of diet, worship services, or holy days. All those things are mere shadows cast before what is to come; the substance is Christ" (The Message)

Some might then conclude, "if you aren't keeping Saturday as the Sabbath, can we just ignore observing the Sabbath?" Not at all!

## **2. The Sabbath is more important than some people think.**

But everyone should observe the Sabbath **principle** which is that everyone need to take at least one day out of seven and devote it to **worship** and **rest**.

Some practical implications

- We need to get as much of our work done on days other than Sunday so that we can **reserve** that day for rest and worship.
- Don't save all your **household** projects for Sunday afternoon.

Billy Graham is credited with having once said "Jesus tells us it is OK to help your ox out of the ditch on the Sabbath. But, if your ox gets in the ditch every Sabbath, you need to either get rid of the ox or fill up the ditch"

- Limit **Recreational** activities on Sunday. The sad fact is that as a society "we worship our play and play at our worship."