

# **4 - Public Ministry mainly around Galilee 3:**

## **[3] In Capernaum and Galilee Part 2**

30 - Deliverance in a synagogue at Capernaum

31/32 - Healing of Peter's mother-in-law

33/34 - Departure from Capernaum to preach

35 - Miraculous catch of fish - Simon

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# nt 30 – Luke 4.31-37

## Deliverance in a synagogue at Capernaum

*Read carefully Mark 1.21-28, John 2.12*

*30-1 Rebellious spiritual powers are destructive to man*

*30-2 Elements that are always in the background of the Gospel record*

*30-3 The teaching authority of Jesus contrasts with the teachers of the law*

*30-4 The fear-driven demonic “testimony”*

*30-5 Jesus silences such “testimony”- “Be quiet!”*

*30-6 The people speak out their inner thoughts*

*30-7 The need for personal life, security, peace and freedom call for deliverance*

### 30-1 Rebellious spiritual powers are destructive to man

The Old Testament understands angels as being placed over the ethnic peoples of the earth [Deuteronomy 32.9]. Some of them are enemies of God's people, as Daniel records Michael's engagement with them in coming to Israel's help [Daniel 10]. The apostle Paul will speak of the Christian involved in a daily wrestle with “principalities and powers” and “spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places” [Ephesians 6.12]. Paul can also speak of the “enemy of God” as death [1 Corinthians 15.24-27] insofar that it brings ruin to the living creature that God has made.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke we encounter an understanding of the spiritual world derived from the experience of people with demonic forces. Jesus confronted malignant spirits, functioning under Satan as their head, who invaded and occupied the souls of men to ruin them and to frustrate the will of God in His desire to establish His reign.

### 30-2 Elements that are always in the background of the Gospel record

For Jesus to embrace his call at his Baptism by John in the Jordan, where

he receives the wonderful testimony of his Father in heaven, and the Holy Spirit, it was necessary for him, directly afterwards, to face an encounter directly with Satan on our behalf [*nt21*] in the wilderness.

Jesus, in his parable of the Sower speaks of Satan as snatching away the word that is sown [Luke 8.4-15].

Jesus does speak of the evil thoughts and sins that make men “unclean” as coming from within their own hearts. Over the whole of his teaching, whether he is criticizing scribes and Pharisees, or instructing his disciples, he does not drive the motivation for sin back any deeper than the hearts of men. They are complicit in their evil actions; but complicit with a fallen Satan-dominated world.

In His teaching about prayer, he makes clear that our heavenly Father is not of a character to lead us into temptation, but rather we must look to Him to “deliver us from the evil one” every day. Such deliverance is from Satan, who Jesus speaks of as the strong one, who has taken people captive. It will be only Jesus, as the Stronger Man, who can plunder Satan’s house and release the captive men and women.

The conflict with Satanically controlled powers who seek to plunder men and women, is the background of all the language in the gospel story that speaks of deliverance, rescue, ransom, the power of forgiveness, healing, restoration and the like.

### 30-3 The teaching authority of Jesus contrasts with the teachers of the law in Israel

When men and women teach, simply as fellow humans, they appeal to outside authorities. This is particularly true of the “scribes” who, as we saw in *nt24-2*, join a rabbi to pass on his yoke, his interpretation and understanding of the law’s practical application. So it is not surprising that each teacher of the law quotes his master and is constantly referring to the fact that “some say” and “other’s say”; they often come to a deep divide in their positions and perspectives. The dealing with the healed blind man in John 9 is a typical example.

Jesus’ teaching on the other hand, stands quite free of any appeal to the authority of men and women. His teaching is not derived from other persons except his heavenly Father. In the latter case, he is not ashamed; indeed, it is integral to his manifesting the Father to us, to admit “my teaching is not mine” [John 7.16-17].

As the Word of God himself, he can speak simply as “I say to you...” or, as John’s Gospel so often reports it “Truly truly, I say unto you...” So Jesus’ teaching is consistent with Who he is, it has its source in his Being. Authority, as it trans-

lates the Greek word for it [ἐξουσία] simply means that, it is the expressed power coming out from the very being of the person.

So, the exercise of authority here is a revelation of who Jesus is. It is one of those many situations in the Gospel record where his actions force us to consider his person. That, after all, is the proper focus of the Gospels.

### 30-4 The fear-driven demonic “testimony”

The very presence of Jesus is enough for a man in the synagogue, who has a hidden, spiritual presence that controls him, to speak. But, while it is the voice of the man it is the expression of the demon. The man’s anguish and cry is used to express the evil spirit’s own disturbance and fear. In Jesus of Nazareth is recognized the destroyer of all demons [“us”]. And a conclusion is drawn, in such a way as to make an equation; Jesus of Nazareth is the “Holy One of God”.

### 30-5 Jesus silences such “testimony”- “Be quiet!”

Jesus has no need of the speech of his, and our, enemies. The truth of the statement of the demon concerning Jesus’ identity, as to fact, is not in question. And we the readers are in a position to confirm its truth, but from different, and more trustworthy, sources. But here, it is not spoken from one who is in the truth, nor practices it. So Jesus will not use it, the demons are not his agents. Mark’s gospel will stress the secret of his personage as being held back for a time. So, the statement of the demon may be an attempt to upstage Jesus, in declaring the secret of his person before He wishes it to be known.

### 30-5 Authority expressed by command, followed by power - “Come out!”

Sternly, Jesus commands the demon to leave the man. In our Lord’s view, demons are “in” the body of the person but are not the soul of the person. They are usurping passengers who, as spirits, use the body of humans to execute their own purposes. They are controllers, who rob the person of freedom. Accordingly they must be driven out; and here it is by a word.

As it leaves, the demon, consistent with the fact that it uses the body of the man, shakes him and uses his voice to shriek its own discomfort.

### 30-6 The people speak out their inner thoughts

The people in the synagogue express amazement as they ask one another for each person’s perceptions. “What are we to make of this?” They recognize

that they have before them a 'new teaching', in the sense of a timely teaching, one that indicates that a new movement of God is coming forth here.

Further, this new teaching accords with an authority being expressed. So what we have is a questioning concerning a new time dawning with this man. They are recognizing the authority of God for they know that the demons are addressed and they obey. They have before them a man in whom, not only do they, as men and women, recognize that his authority is in sharp contrast to the teaching of the scribes – those powerless purveyors of men's opinions; they also see that the power to liberate them from their spiritual enemies has come right before them through the word of a local man from Nazareth in their synagogue in Capernaum.

We are also left with the same questions. This is the intention of the Gospel writer.

### 30-7 The need for personal life, security, peace and freedom call for deliverance

We see the place here that Jesus gave in his ministry to these unbalanced minds. It looks as though the demon has initiated the exchange, but that is not really the case; Jesus' person, through his presence, has called forth the movement.

We see Jesus speaking to this man's condition – he has a parasitical, spiritual passenger, who controls him, having taken over his life. Jesus calms such persons' terrors as he delivers them, recalling them to their God. He distinguished between the men themselves and the spirits that controlled them.

The church generally, and particularly in the West, has retreated from these areas of supernatural confrontation which the Incarnation of the Son of God, and His death and resurrection confront. Indeed, we use the insights of psychology for the abandoned insights that came to us in this ancient gospel of Jesus.

Yet, the same psychical phenomena are still here today, even if the belief itself is absent. For when health is good, and a happy life are uninterrupted, where people's strength is firm and their hope is full, then their need of God is primarily directed to the encouragement of life.

But if the defences of life are shattered, and people are preoccupied with the need for life itself and security from inwardly-experienced oppression then they need peace from their malicious enemies. Enemies who are not the person themselves; even if it is true that such persons are co-operative in their enemies' establishing of their control over them. In those places, and at that time, then we are summoned to remember the psychical context in which Jesus of Nazareth

worked and look to the Saviour to deliver them.

## nt 31 & 32 – Luke 4.38-41

### Healing of Peter's mother in law

### Other healings at Capernaum

*Read carefully Matthew 8.14-17, Mark 1.29-34,*

*31/32-1 Peter's mother-in-law is healed by Jesus*

*31/32-2 Healings from different diseases, more deliverances*

*31/32-3 The demons know who is confronting them*

*31/32-4 Deliverance and restoration*

*31/32-5 He has taken our infirmities and born our diseases*

#### 31/32-1 Peter's mother-in-law is healed by Jesus

Luke's account here moves us directly from the encounter in the synagogue to Simon's house. His mother in law must have lived with them, or she was laid up in her son-in-law's house because of the fever.

Jesus was asked to do something for her. His actions follow; Jesus stands over her, presumably as she was prone, and Luke has it that he rebuked the fever. That is he spoke severely to it and it left her.

The proof of the instant nature of the healing – the leaving of the fever – is that she got up and ministered to them.

#### 31/32-2 Healings from different diseases, more deliverances

As evening comes on there are many people who have sick relatives and friends bring them to Jesus. Luke's record, following Mark's, records that there were diseased people who were healed and people, who had demons in them, who were delivered.



### 31/32-3 The demons know who is confronting them

There are two titles that Luke wants us to recognize that come from the demons – they know Jesus as the Son of God and also as the Messiah – the Christ. But, as we saw in **nt30-5**, Jesus does not permit them to speak.

In these exchanges between Jesus and the demons, the Gospel writers are presenting to us recognitions of the identity of Jesus. At the same time, they make it known to us, the readers of their book, that, at the time, Jesus would not allow this information concerning him to become known. We have already seen that this has to do with who is giving the testimony [**see nt30-5**] and also that, at that time, it might bring Jesus' identity to be known and spoken of in a way that it might not have suited him just then.

After the events of Jesus life, death, resurrection and ascension, the synoptic writers are leading us to a conclusion that Jesus is the Son of God, and is the Christ. Leastways, that is the conclusion of Peter [Mark 8.29; Luke 9.20] which afterwards sets the scene for a disclosure of the nature of the suffering Messiah. Jesus wants to make the disciples aware, after Father reveals Who He is to them, that the Messiah's way of suffering is integral to his mission. A matter the disciples would not have known, and according to Mark's record, found it hard to get to grips with.

### 31/32-4 Deliverance and restoration

As we read these testimonies of the Gospel writers, most of us have already come to the conclusion about Who Jesus is, for the Spirit of God has instructed us.

As we reflect on these encounters with sick and demonised people we learn what it is that we are saved from and to what we are restored when God comes to us as man, all for our sakes. We learn that disease as it shows itself in our bodily ailments is not something arising from the will of God. To be disease-ridden is to experience life in a way that God did not intend. The coming of the Word of God in the flesh is the occasion expressing to us that a restoration has begun. Through the ministry of the Word made flesh – through his spoken word and laying on of his hands – people are experiencing that they are being bodily changed/restored and are being inwardly liberated as spiritual powers are displaced out of them by a word.

### 31/32-5 He has taken our infirmities and born our diseases

We see that Jesus does not heal like a doctor does, as we see clearly

in **nt36-4** as he touches the leper. He heals because, at the Incarnation of the Word, he has taken up into himself, without ceasing to be God, all the deep trauma and brokenness of the human race. For weaknesses and diseases have come upon them by virtue of their own disobedience and then have been exacerbated by malicious activity of the devil.

Matthew points to this in his record of the people gathered about the door in Capernaum and the night of constant healing and deliverance that the disciples witnessed.

## nt 33&34 – Luke 4.42-44

### Leaving Capernaum for a preaching tour

*Read carefully Matthew 8.18; 4.23-25, Mark 1.35-39, John 2.13*

*33/34 -1 People desire Jesus to stay*

*33/34-2 Jesus submitted to the Father who sent him*

*33/34-3 I must preach...*

*33/34-4 ...the good news of the kingdom of God...*

*33/34-5 Word and works of Jesus*

### 33/34 -1 People desire Jesus to stay

Again, Luke's account here moves us directly from Simon's house, and the evening healings to the very next day. Jesus had gone out into a desert place, Mark says that he did this to pray. But the crowds did not want him to leave them. They pursued him [Mk] and sought him out [Lk]. Mark has it that Simon and the others with him followed Jesus, expressing how everyone wanted him.

Perhaps we can think of the crowd as still needy, many would be thankful for the healings to their friends and relatives that had taken place the night before. Others would be attracted by what this man is doing.

Mark records that what Jesus said was said to the disciples. Luke records that the crowd is addressed as to why Jesus must move on. They learn that he is a man on a mission and he is not beholden to them, even by way of compassion for their needs.



### 33/34-2 Jesus submitted to the Father who sent him

Following Luke, we learn that Jesus is a man who is “sent”. The healings and the deliverances just done are consistent with the mission of the Word of God taking flesh and coming among us, but they are not the mission. The reason Jesus has “come out” – a word Mark uses, consistent with Luke’s emphasis, in the sense of sent by God to carry through his mission [4.18; 9.48; 10.16]- is that he has been sent.

We the readers, along with the crowd and the disciples, learn that the saving work of the Messiah finds its drive and source in another Person who is distinguished from Jesus himself. This is important for it will mean that while the distinction between the Father and the Son can be made as to their Persons, and while there is an obedience rendered by the Son to the Father – for that is the form of the loving response of the Son to the Father – nevertheless their decided purpose is one.

We recognize then that the love of the Father, as the One who sent Jesus for our salvation cannot be separated from the action of the Son of God.

### 33/34-3 I must preach...

Preaching is a public announcement made in the hearing of others. It heralds, or makes known something that is previously unknown – and so is news - to the hearers. When the preacher is “sent” it is an announcement made known on behalf of the sender. And when the sender is God, it is “good” news for it speaks of his outgoing love which, on this occasion through the work done through His Son, is restoring those who are lost to the Father.

### 33/34-4 ...the good news of the kingdom of God

This is the first occasion in Luke’s gospel of the use of the expression ‘kingdom of God’. After this Luke uses it frequently to state the theme and content of Jesus’ preaching [Luke 8.1; 9.2,60; 16.16; Acts 8.12].

Luke stresses the preaching of Jesus, omitting the deliverances which Mark records as the preaching tour proceeds around Galilee.

As we have noted before [nt23-4], when we considered Mark 1.15, Jesus is both the preacher of the message of the Kingdom and, at the same time, the content of that rule as it comes through himself. He is not, like a prophet who brings the word of God, in the form of simply speaking the word he has heard from God; Jesus does that, but he does it not as the prophet does, Jesus *is* the Word of God himself.

So, when we think of the kingdom he is announcing, it is God’s news

of the arrival of His Word, come to us as man, without ceasing to be God. We learn this news through the Word himself who has taken flesh as the man Jesus of Nazareth. So it is news – because announced [preached] – but it is the arrival of the kingdom as well – in the presence of the Messiah – because of Who is speaking it to us.

It is the in-breaking of the power of God for healing, restoration of captives to their freedoms of right mind being recalled to their God, through the presence of the person of the Son of God. This is why He “came out” or was “sent”.

### 33/34-5 Word and works of Jesus

What this means is that the preaching is accompanied by works – it is both word and work which the preaching of Jesus demonstrates. Works without the word would have simply drawn people to a wonder-working man to adulate and to use for their own purposes. A preaching man with works requires them to embrace that God, who loves them as His people, is doing something which is consistent with His promises to them. It speaks of the arrival of a “fulfilled time” as we saw in Mark 1.15.

## nt 35 – Luke 5.1-11

### The call of the first disciples and the miraculous catch of fish

*Read carefully Matthew 4.18-22, Mark 1.16-20, John 21.1-1; 1.35-51*

*35 -1 Common elements seen in different incidents*

*35-2 Luke's distinctive words*

*35-3 The occasion of the “word of God”.*

*35-4 Simon may disagree but he can obey*

*35-5 The Word of God and works of Jesus*

*35 -6 “Depart from me”...*

*35 -7 “Fear not ”...*

### 35 -1 Common elements seen in different incidents

Some scholars think of this incident as a variation of the miraculous catch of fish recorded after the resurrection of Jesus in John 21.1-11. But that is a different situation speaking of a different issue at a different time. Further, while it is possible that the call of Simon and Andrew, and James and John as Mark 1.16-20 records it could be this story minus the catch of fish, it is more likely to be another incident.

### 35-2 Luke's distinctive words

[a] The lake of Genesaret.

Luke always uses the word 'lake' [λίμνη] to refer to the inland water of Galilee while Matthew and Mark use the word for a 'sea' [θαλασσα]. The word Genesaret is used by Mark for the land immediately south of Capernaum. It is also called Gennesar as a local name for the lake [Josephus Bel 3.463,506]. The Old Testament calls it Chinnereth in Numbers 34.11]. John's Gospel calls it the lake of Tiberius.

The lake is 13 miles in the North-South direction and 7 miles East-West. It is 700 feet below sea level.

[b] Peter addresses Jesus as "master" [epistata]; it is a word only found in Luke and is used seven times in addressing Jesus; it means anyone in authority. Luke never uses "rabbi", which is a more specific term. This usage, in itself indicates something very different to what we saw in the Markan reading when we considered **nt24**.

### 35-3 The occasion of the "word of God".

Luke has the crowd pressing upon Jesus as they heard the "word of God" [5.1]. This marks not a distinctive word so much as a distinctive usage of Luke. Luke will tell us at the parable of the Sower **nt87** that the seed which is sown and broadcast is the "word of God". Those whom Jesus considers his mother and brothers are those who hear the "word of God" and do it [Luke 11.28].

The desire of the crowd to hear, and the press, drives Jesus to ask Simon for his boat to be put off the shore a little and, seating himself as a teacher, he speaks to the crowd.

There is a movement here; Jesus first is requiring Simon and Andrew's boat. It is asked for and borrowed to aid in the propagation of the "word of God" to the covenant people of God who reside there. Later, Jesus will make a com-

mand that they put out for a catch. In the episode that follows, the men themselves are required and commandeered for the work of catching men alive for God. However, sandwiched in between is the awareness for Simon that he is a sinful man, he asks the Lord to depart from him.

### 35-4 Simon may disagree but he can obey

In the face of the nights' fruitless toil, and no doubt, contrary to the judgment of the fishermen that the time for taking large catches was at night, Simon registered a protest as Jesus suggests they put out for a catch.

But he obeys and does it "at your word", the seine net is let down and dragged under the water and the catch is stunning. The sons of Zebedee are called in to help and both boats are nearly swamped. Clearly, Luke wants us to know that the catch was really abnormal and in that sense miraculous and that it took place in obedience to the word of God.

### 35-5 The Word of God and works of Jesus

It was not as if the preacher had finished preaching, and then, afterwards had a little time to dally with fishing whilst in the boat of professionals. The preached message, the word of God, is not discontinuous with the command to go out into the deep and let down the nets - both are the Word speaking.

Nor is there a difference from the subject of the preacher to the subject of the commercial fisherman. They are not separated. It is not that the word of a carpenter doesn't gel with that of the fisherman – the two trades are not the issue of contrast here. The *person* is decisive, as always. He who is speaking the "word of God" to the crowd also speaks the word of God to Simon and the fishermen. Indeed, there isn't a word that he speaks that is not the word of God.

This is what Simon has come to understand, while being sufficiently a fisherman to know that the catch of fish is very great indeed. But it is implications of Who it is that he is dealing with that loom larger and more significant. For Simon has registered that the word spoken to him, which he begrudgingly obeyed, has the force of someone who is master of the sea. In whatever way Simon understands Jesus, he does know that he has encountered godlikeness in human form. Accordingly he knows his own sinfulness as a man in the encounter with the "master".

He reacts like others who have found themselves in the presence of God whether like Abraham [Genesis 18.27] or Job [Job 42.6] or Isaiah [Isaiah 6.5]. They have registered Someone and their inner response is, as they encounter that

Person, to know their own sinful self.

### 35 -6 "Depart from me"...

Simon appears to draw a conclusion. If Jesus is such a person he can surely find no use in such a person as Simon. It is because Simon sees himself as a sinful man that he wants Jesus to disassociate himself from him.

Yet, to say such a thing is to have Jesus' interests as foremost in his view. Simon wants Jesus to depart from him for he thinks he can bring him no honour, being the sort of man he knows himself to be.

But Simon only knows himself to be a sinful man precisely because Jesus has been met, encountered, and even obeyed under protest. He has learned of his sin not through the law, nor through any judgment passed upon him, but by being met by the incarnate Word of God in a gracious and blessed way; the man Jesus has used his boat but repaid it in the greatest catch they have ever encountered.

### 35 -7 "Fear not "...

The Greek construction signifies that Simon should stop worrying; it calms an existing fear. Because it is the Word of God as well it will achieve what it says. Jesus now turns the events around for the encouragement of the men. For, if they have seen such a great catch here, then they have had such a foretaste that will simply serve them for the new task, which is to catch men – in the sense of take them alive for God.

Not a word about his sinful state! No attempt made to meet that issue except that the discipleship still stands, they are going on to the task, Jesus is not departing from Simon.

# nt 36 – Luke 5.12-16

## The healing of a leper

*Read carefully Matthew 8.1-4, Mark 1.40-44; Leviticus 13.2-14.32*

*36 -1 Belief there is about ability; yet he seeks His will*

*36-2 Mercy is granted as a pure act of will*

*36-3 The mind of Christ*

*36-4 He declares his decision by word and work*

*36-5 "Go, show yourself to the priest...testimony to them"*

*36-6 A cleansed man returns to his place among his people*

*36-7 Jesus withdrew*

### 36 -1 Belief there is about ability; yet he seeks His will

Luke presents this man "full of leprosy" [RV] approaching Jesus, confessing that he has no doubt that Jesus is capable of healing him. Luke tells us nothing about how he came to this place of trust, or how his mind came to be convinced. What is presented is the result – which is his active trust in Jesus.

Since no one comes to a place of trust without revelation we may infer that this man is not having a vague hope when he thinks of Jesus and his leprosy, he knows something that the Father has revealed to him concerning the Nazarene.

However, the leper does not know Jesus' mind concerning himself. Accordingly he seeks his will, "will he consider healing him?"

### 36-2 Mercy is granted as a pure act of will

We must not make a mistake about the resident power of Jesus to heal, it is not simply latent, lying there hidden, like oil or coal under the ground, simply waiting to be tapped. The leper does not draw anything from Jesus by himself – even his evident trust is a response to the initiative of God to let him know there is healing in Jesus.

Perhaps the lady with the issue of blood comes closest to thinking of a resident power, for she just believes if she touches him she'll be healed; even though we may say that her method, of touching him in a pressing crowd, would



be controlled by the current laws of defilement. Yet even there, Jesus turns and faces her, flushing her into the open.

It is not that we can in some way come and “use” the power of Jesus without yielding to his person, without engaging him. This is what the leper understands, he will not lay hold of Jesus’ abilities – about which he is sure - without yielding to his will in the matter. “What is the mind of Jesus for me in this matter of my leprosy?” is the central question for this man. He will yield to Jesus’ answer.

The leper understands that he is looking for mercy from God in asking this man what he would do about him. For mercy is not something that is due, it is something quite undeserved. When it is granted it is not a matter of law or justice, but a matter of compassion issuing from the sovereign. Consequently, it is in the will of the sovereign to grant it - or not - as he wills. So, knowing Jesus, the leper does not need to know of Jesus’ power and authority, he is sure of that or he would not come. In coming to Jesus he seeks his decision, what he seeks is his *will*.

This is the decisive matter to see in this exchange. The leper is presenting his understanding of Jesus as a King who is coming at a time of the kingdom’s compassionate rule.

While it is time still, we can ask similar things, with a similar view in mind.

### 36-3 The mind of Christ

In looking at the leper’s question, we see that there is a resident will in the person of Jesus. When the Word of God takes flesh, when God comes to us as man, it is not the case that the will of the Godhead took over the will of the man. The mind of Christ can be known in a matter; his decision may be discovered, as in this case, by a direct question.

We must not think of Jesus as some actor on a stage, who knows his lines and simply gives the replies that God would have him give, in some pre-determined way. He has a true will, as a true man, and the life that he lives to God in the flesh was a true reflection of his own mind.

Indeed, when the Word of God takes flesh such as ours - flesh that is mortal, subject to sin and its results - it is for the purpose of redeeming it for us. To do that, the life he lived in the flesh was a life of obedience freely offered to God in all his decisive choices in the particulars of life. He cuts a way forward for us in the human life, so that, in him, we may follow. His decisions were an expression of his own true mind. For us, after his death and resurrection and ascension to receive his Spirit is to have the mind of Christ [1 Corinthians 2.16].

### 36-4 He declares his decision by word and work

Jesus answers this man directly, “Yes, I will heal you.” This comes to us as a revelation of the compassion and mercy of Jesus and it gives us confidence when we ask for ourselves. For here is a revelation of the very character of God.

Jesus uses his own body to touch him as he utters the words “...be clean”. Here is a wonderful revelation of the incarnate Word of God, not healing from a distance – although He can do that [nt37] to show another facet of his character and power – but engaging in touching the leper who is the very person no one would ever touch, but rather shun.

The incarnate Word heals by taking on our fallen flesh, by engaging in standing with us where we are. He does not prescribe something for us to do or take. He heals by taking on our diseases and bearing them in his own body – He heals in that He is one with us; fully entering our fallen, diseased state. This is what we learn from his touch.

And the great salvation that he brings is that He reverses what is the irreversible for us – a leprous disease defiles the man to such an extent that he is cast out of society. And while the disease can defile, who can reverse that? The Word incarnate does that, standing in it with us, He exchanges our poverty and dirtiness for his riches and purity, in whatever situation. The leprosy left the leper immediately.

### 36-5 “Go, show yourself to the priest...testimony to them...”

Jesus is careful to not let a public perception of him as a wonder worker be established. He forbids the man to tell anyone, except of course the priest. They were the verifiers of the skin disease having left and so, like a health inspector, were the ones who opened entry for a leper to return to society through their recognition of the facts before them. Usually, if the priest was satisfied, a sacrifice would be offered. We see that Jesus gives the same instruction to the lepers who were cleansed later in his ministry, as Luke 17.11-13 records [nt170; see Leviticus 13.2-14.32].

How shall we read “as a testimony to them”? If “them” means “the priests” then it is as an evidence to the authorities that Jesus intends; J.B.Phillips translates it this way, so does the REB.

Such a translation opens up for us another deeper theme which is running in the mind of Jesus; a theme which is independent of the leper himself.

Moses and Aaron are both of the line of Levi. Both are in a relationship as two brothers to the word of God. But whereas Moses mediates the word of God in a direct and clear way by virtue of his encounters with the living God on the mountain, Aaron, as the priest, receives the word of God through his brother the prophet and carries out the responses which the word of God has directed in the form of liturgy. In this way the worship of the people, which is the responsibility of Aaron, may be simply understood as the grace of God to them, giving them the way to approach Him and to make the appropriate responses to Him which are right at that time and also safe for them.

But what is clear in this relationship, is that *the word of the prophet is primary and the response of the priest is secondary and derivative*. If that relationship is ever reversed - as it was in the case of the golden calf - then there is a need to renew the covenant afresh. This we see right from the beginning when Moses breaks the tablets and the broken covenant has to be renewed.

It is also true that Israel's worship is not left to their own devices - it was carefully prescribed. We see the terrifying scenario that resulted when Aaron's two sons, ordained to the priesthood that day, decided to offer strange fire - fire which was not in obedience to the prophetic word. They died that same day.

The history of Israel records this continual tension of the priest wishing to gain authority over the prophet; desiring to be autonomous about the worship that is offered to God.

We notice the powerful warnings of Scripture as to the mixture of entering into covenant with the Baals and the Asherim; and we see Elijah's drastic solution to that. We see eventually the eighth-century prophets are led to declare that the worship of Israel is disgusting to God because it is simply a rote worship offered in the midst of radical disobedience and lack of care for the poor neighbours. Eventually, when the professional priests of Bethel are to be rebuked, God sends a man who is not a priest by lineage but a dresser of sycamore trees.

The great sin of Jeroboam, which centred around false worship, led to the exile, and the prophets then begin to speak of the sort of fasting that God asks for as opposed to the manipulative worship which tries to make the voice of the offerer heard on high - it is a return to care for the neighbour and watching over the relationships which the covenant requires [Isaiah 58.1-8].

Now, here, with the coming of the Word of God in the flesh, bringing care and restoration to the leprous and the broken of those within covenant with the Lord of Israel, Jesus has a word for the priests. He is bringing before them the restoration of the leprous man to a place where they must now give their testimony that he is healed.

And in doing that Jesus is forcing them to be derivative to the Word of God.

He is calling upon them, in a gracious but compelling way, to admit that they need to follow on from what the Word has initiated and respond with their testimony that this is a good Word, some good thing has been done here.

The arrival of the previously-leprous man in their midst requires them to confirm, by word and admission of him to the society, that they are responding to the prophetic word which is being expressed in their midst. In this way Jesus offers them to rightfully be restored and take their place again in the covenant relationships in which they were initially set. That would be a restoration of the kingdom!

### 36-6 A cleansed man returns to his place among his people

However, we may also take “them” to mean both the authorities and the society into which the leper will now have a re-entry; so RSV translates “...for a proof to the people.”

We see here that Jesus upholds the law and directs a man to the ordered arrangement that God had set up for such a situation. He didn’t just heal him and leave him to make his way in the society around him.

Here is the making of man who was unclean, according to God’s former way of working with Israel, into a clean man, able to take his place again in society and able to approach his neighbour and his God. That former way of God’s working - prior to Jesus - was a dealing with the *externals* of life. It was a sign of deeper matters that God would eventually deal within the hearts of men and women.

Here, in the case of the leper, the cleanness is rendered to his body. Not of course, in some academic way, but really, through the healing Jesus brought him.

There are other sorts of defilement, or uncleanness, which affect the whole person and take control of his inner life; demons making their residence in the body of a person is good example. The Gadarene demoniac is an example of a cleansing of the inner life of a man, which comes to mean the restoration of his inner control, and restoring him to a right mind, see **nt40**.

Significantly, deliverance from demons also renders the person capable of taking his/her place in the society of God’s people again.

### 36-7 Jesus withdrew

Jesus is now becoming known as a wonder worker. Reports about him are circulating widely. People are beginning to realize that healing and help from

him are available.

He withdraws into the more deserted areas, avoiding the cities and Luke records that he prayed. Jesus' constant life of prayer is a matter to which Luke consistently refers.

## nt 37 – Matthew 8.5-13

### The Centurion at Capernaum

*Read carefully Luke 7.1-10, John 4.46-53*

*37 -1 When you live in an occupied country...*

*37-2 "there came to him a centurion..."*

*37-3 He approaches Jesus out of compassion for his servant*

*37-4 The centurion's view of Jesus*

*37-5 The man under authority who himself commands*

*37-6 Chain of command implies a set order is recognised*

*37-7 An obedient Son*

*37-8 Jesus is astonished by the faith of the centurion*

*37-9 Jesus' word accomplishes what it is sent to do*

### 37 -1 When you live in an occupied country...

The Word took flesh at a time in the history of the covenant people of God when their land was occupied by and subject to the government of the Romans. Rome sustained her order and control by the placement of garrisons at strategic points – and so the presence of the Roman soldier was a constant daily matter of life.

The timing of the Lord being born during the Roman occupation is a significant matter; for it set the sorts of issues that the Jewish people had in their minds and daily experience. These experiences set the backdrop for many of the groups of people that Jesus encounters. There were zealots, who are really keen to see the Romans driven from the country and longed for their people to be free of the oppression. There were Saducees, who were a political party content to engage with Rome and make as best a time of it as they could. There were Pharisees, who as a party expressed a religious separation. They were attempting to hold to the clean and pure traditions of the Jewish law; they were the main

educators of the young.

There were also tax collectors who, like Levi, were gathering taxes for the occupiers of their country under contract – making their living as a commission on the side. These underlying issues come up for us as we read the Gospels.

### 37-2 “there came to him a centurion...”

Typically a Roman imperial legion was made up of 6000 men, although, since they were usually designed to function under strength, it was more often 5300. The legion’s most basic group was a *contubernium*: 8 men in a tent.

Ten of these groups made up a *centuria* and was overseen by a centurion.

Six *centuriae*, making a total of 480 fighting men, plus their officers made a cohort; and they were led by a *cohor*.

Ten cohorts made up a legion [4800 men] plus usually 120 Cavalry and the officers. A legion was led by the legate.

The 59-60 centurions of each legion were the backbone of the fighting force. They ran the army from day to day and gave orders in the field.

This man, as he approached Jesus, was a professional soldier, who held a worthy mid-rank in the Roman legion, and above all, was a man used to command and exercised real, daily authority in his own arena.

### 37-3 He approaches Jesus out of compassion for his servant

This man’s personal servant was suffering great pain; for he was “sick of the palsy, grievously tormented” [RV], “paralysed and racked with pain” [REB], “paralysed and in dreadful pain” [JBP]. What is clear is that the man could not get up and come to Jesus himself.

So this called for a “home visit” and Jesus responded in that way, declaring his intent to come and heal him. It was at this point the centurion declared himself and made a wonderful reply.

### 37-4 The centurion’s view of Jesus

This man had a high estimation of Jesus as a person. He was not an arrogant man searching out the local colour for an answer to his servant’s problem. He had a view of Jesus that was greater than his own view of himself. He made clear that he was not worthy to have Jesus come to his house.



### 37-5 The man under authority who himself commands

But he brought his military training and daily experience to bear upon his request. He understood that if Jesus would just give a command, the order, a simple word, then his servant would be healed. He then explained that, in his own experience of being a man under authority, he simply gave an order to a soldier or his servant and it took effect.

Now, the way he expressed this reasoned approach was that he was in a chain of command himself. He recognized that he was a person who was “under authority”; that is, he worked as an obeyer of his own superior officer. So, in the first place he had no difficulty in Jesus commanding him about his servant.

Nor did he have any difficulty whatsoever in thinking that a matter may be brought to effect, at a distance, by the command of a superior, who was not immediately present at the seat of the action.

### 37-6 Chain of command implies a set order is recognised

However, what is implied, and what Jesus recognized as true faith, was that this man saw Jesus, as a man set in the relation of a ruler to the world around him, and to sick and diseased people in particular. He commands them. So, if Jesus would give a command, then it would be so, the servant would recover.

In declaring his military setting as the basis for his own experience, the centurion implied that Jesus was ruler over such things as bring disease. This man, without knowing the Jewish name for it, had discerned the kingdom of God. He understood what Jesus was doing; but he not as a simple man looking at a miracle and saying “wow!”; the centurion knows more than amazement. This man had reasoned, or been given revelation concerning how to think of Jesus in relation to the world He governed.

### 37-7 An obedient Son

Whether the centurion thought of Jesus as - like himself - being subordinate to a greater and so, when he gave an order to those under him, it was effective, we cannot know from this encounter. He may simply have worked from a knowledge of chain of command.

But we, the readers, know another piece of the puzzle. We know that Jesus' subordination to his Father as an obedient Son fits entirely with what the centurion had been saying. He may not have known it but the centurion was saying more than he knew.

Of course, we would want to be careful in thinking of Jesus as some

middle-order ranker with the Father; that would not be a true picture. We may wish to see Him as sharing in the Being of the Father and the Spirit as no less God than They. But we would understand that, in his humiliation for our sakes, He was obedient to the Father, not as a matter of rank, but as a matter of will, as the practical way God took to bring about our salvation.

### 37-8 Jesus is astonished by the faith of the centurion

In this episode the Gospels have moved a long way from the faith of the unbelieving Jews who need signs and wonders before they will exercise faith in God. Here was a man who had the relational perception of Jesus that it was simply his word that effected what it said. This man had truly come to the place where He knew that the word of Jesus went forth from Him and accomplished the express purpose for which it was sent.

Just as rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return there without watering the earth, so God's word issues from his mouth and it doesn't go back to him empty without accomplishing the purpose for which it was sent. This was Isaiah's picture of a God's effective word [Isaiah 55.10-11].

Jesus' word goes out from him and it does not return to Him void. Such ideas the Jews might have known were written in the prophet Isaiah – this soldier had come to see it and believe it in regard to Jesus. He had cut straight through to the reality of the kingdom of God as it was expressed in Jesus.

After contrasting such faith with the faith "in Israel" Jesus made clear that this man was a forerunner of other Gentile persons, who would come from all over the world to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. The Roman centurion was a challenge to the Jewish listeners of Jesus. For they were the ones who should have belonged to the kingdom and would be found outside, with much regret and bitterness.

This theme of the gnashing of teeth - powerful regret - is strongly repetitive in Matthew, who makes frequent references to hell [See 13.42,50; 22.13; 24.51; 25.30. It is a theme which appears in Job 16.9 and the Psalms 35.16; 37.12; and 112.10. Lamentations 2.16].

### 37-9 Jesus' word accomplishes what it is sent to do

We, the readers, are left in no doubt that the word of Jesus is the very Word of God – he does command the centurion. It is to simply "go home now and everything will happen as you believed it will". [JBP]

Strangely, the matter of the healing was not commanded; Jesus did not speak it out. He dealt with the faithful man before him; he commanded the

centurion to “go home” for the mission was accomplished. What he would find was that it was with his servant as he believed it would be. Matthew records that it was so at that actual moment.

The servant was healed at a distance because Jesus, a man with authority, said it would be so. Jesus did this in response to a response. Because a man of faith acted on the revelation he had been given that the Saviour had such authority to command and that it would be so.

## nt 38 – Matthew 8.18-22

### Two would-be disciples

*Read Luke 9.57-62; 1Kings19.19-21; Psalm 8.4, Daniel 7.13-14. Ezekiel 2.1*

*38 -1 Presumptions about following Jesus*

*38-2 The scribe who would go anywhere.*

*38-3 The “son of man”...*

*38-4 A disciple can be with Jesus, but not contribute*

*38-5 The men who, following Moses, would put family first*

### 38 -1 Presumptions about following Jesus

Just before crossing the lake from Capernaum to the Decapolis, which is Matthew’s setting, two would-be disciples approach Jesus. Luke sets this saying and a third one, under a general collection of discipleship sayings.

All volunteers are people who, have a picture of what they think is involved in a matter, and then express their desire to be involved. Their readiness arises from within themselves and their presuppositions. Each of the Gospel exchanges deals with the presumptions the would-be follower showed about the discipleship that they envisaged in joining up with Jesus as a follower. The ensuing exchanges with Jesus question their readiness for such a venture.

### 38-2 The scribe who would go anywhere.

The first man was a scribe. His views about being a disciple may have been formed by the normal context of the wandering rabbi with a group who

attended the rabbi's life and his teaching – his yoke – with a view to propagating it [see **nt24-2** para 1].

What he declared himself willing to do was to “go anywhere”; perhaps he shows us in this expression what he considered to be the uppermost of the challenges for a disciple. In reply, Jesus did not so much as take up the idea of “anywhere” as one appropriate. Jesus' current mission is one which makes him homeless. Indeed, to follow Jesus, in the sense of adopting his life-style, would be to recognize that, while even the wild animals have foxes and hole and a place to perch, Jesus did not. Was the man prepared for this? It seemed a simple exchange with an impulsive man; and at one level it was.

### 38-3 The “son of man” ...

At another level however, we are drawn to penetrate the expression “Son of Man”, which is used by Jesus about himself. Does this say something about who Jesus is, and something about his mission, which makes the scribe's voluntary commitment to follow him anywhere a little shallow? Is there something the scribe has not taken into account about Jesus himself?

Jesus used this way of speaking about himself often. In Matthew's Gospel it is a common expression, indeed, some think that it is just another way of Jesus saying “I”.

The prophet Ezekiel, used this expression about himself, especially when he found himself weak and unable to come to terms with the grandeur and the majesty of the prophetic revelations and encounters he took part in; so, ‘son of man, stand on your feet...” [Ezekiel 2.1; 3.6...].

From its use in Daniel 7.13-14 however, we have a contrasting perspective of the one like the Son of Man who is presented to the “ancient of days” – God Himself -and given an everlasting kingdom. Here the sharpness of the picture is that this personage is a *human person*, who is given the kingdom of God that includes all the peoples of the world. Unlike the other kingdoms that Daniel prophesies about - Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Rome - this kingdom, given to the son of man, will never be destroyed.

### 38-4 A disciple can be with Jesus, but not contribute

In the light of 38-3, perhaps Jesus was putting this volunteer off, for he was not called by God but was just allying himself with Jesus. For it would seem that in describing the life-style of the son of man, Jesus was intimating, by the use of the title, that in the current humiliated setting of his work, what was being established is that eternal kingdom which He will receive as the exalted Son of Man.

And as that son of man, at that time in Israel, what was happening as he moved through Israel was that, by and large, he was rejected and homeless. Indeed, it was through that very rejection the kingdom would come to its' climax and be established. This was indeed, a lack which Jesus bore for our sakes, for inherent in the rejection was the life lived without hospitality and acceptance before those for whom he came. It was part of his reproach as the man of sorrows.

He was, of course, received by those who were called by God to know who he is. Among those, the Son of man has a welcome, and a bed, and a place to eat. They were his joy, a gift from the Father.

These disciples, called by God gave him a welcome, but even they could not contribute to the kingdom – a kingdom in which we are all unprofitable servants. They were given to be with him, and to bear witness afterwards to the work He did for us, and in our stead; but therefore, alone.

### 38-5 The men who, following Moses, would put family first

The law of Moses laid it down that the caring for parents and especially giving them a proper burial when they died, was fundamental. An example of this was seen in the exchange between Elijah and Elisha. As Elijah, having put his mantle on Elisha, agreed that Elijah should kiss his parents good bye before he came to serve him.

Matthew makes clear that a greater than Moses had arrived as Jesus came on the scene. [Remember that the Sermon on the mount has preceded this section in Matthew's record.]

Jesus was saying to this man that even his parental requirements and obligations were subject to following him. The burial of the dead should be left to those who are dead. The kingdom's arrival meant that a new life was breaking out on the people of God, it was that life which Jesus and his disciples were caught up with. Both of these exchanges are used by Matthew to make clear that Jesus, as the Son of man, who is the anointed of God, has a a kingdom claim on men and women which supercedes the claim of other ties.

Luke has a third encounter, making much the same point [Luke 9.61-2]. To the man who would, like Elisha, greet his family before he will follow, Jesus spoke of not looking back, but as the ploughman will only plough a straight furrow by looking forward, so must the disciple of Jesus not "look back". It is such a new life, such a totally engrossing way, it has such priority, that what is behind is behind.

# nt 39 – Matthew 8.23-27

## The calming of the stormy sea

*Read carefully Mark 4.35-41; Luke 8.22-25*

*39-1 Journeying across the lake*

*39-2 Men anxious and alert; Jesus asleep*

*39-3 They wake him to save them*

*39-4 He rebukes them about their faith*

*39-5 The usefulness of reading the synoptic parallels*

*39-6 From fear for themselves to awe of him*

*39-7 The impact of the Gospel's presentation of the person of Jesus*

### 39-1 Journeying across the lake

Matthew has Jesus entering into a boat and the disciples follow him. Mark has the context as evening time, and that Jesus, wanting to go over the other side, leaves the crowd and the disciples take him along with them in the boat. Luke's context is similar to Mark's.

### 39-2 Men anxious and alert; Jesus asleep

As a furious squall blew up, the men in the boat were attentive to the elements, and the record declares that the boat was in danger of being swamped. So there was deep anxiety and some action going on – the boat itself would be moving very strongly.

The sharp contrast drawn between the disciples and Jesus could not be clearer; they were anxious and alert, he was asleep, calm and resting, in no way overwhelmed by the situation that was playing out around him.

This contrast is indicative of something that the disciples do not know concerning him; although they were soon to learn.

### 39-3 They wake him to save them

They woke him, very fearful that they were about to drown as the waves



threatened to engulf the boat. The record of all the three gospels here leaves us in no doubt that the disciples were not mistaken, nor had misjudged the seriousness of their predicament. After all, there were some professional fishermen among them! So we are not to think that they were worrying unduly, or were a little neurotic about this. It was, in their sober and good judgment, a dangerous situation.

When they woke him however, it was not that they have a concern for him, so that he might wake up and be alert to his own predicament. Their words were that he should save them, for they were certain that they were about to drown. They were coming to him for rescue. They obviously thought that he could do something, or perhaps he had a plan, or a way that they might escape.

### 39-4 He rebukes them about their faith

If they thought that he might have had a plan, they must have been astonished at his first utterance. He rebuked them for their state of consternation. But it was not that he was challenging their diagnosis of their predicament; as if to mean, "Now look, it is really not that dangerous - you're over-reacting to this little disturbance." What he does address is their fear, their worry. He is saying that they were not trusting, or if they were, they were 'little faiths'.

Matthew's account, if taken by itself, poses some questions for the reader. Is he saying that if they had faith in God about this matter they would not be afraid? Does he mean that the Creator, Who has these winds in his hands, is the person they should be looking to at this time? Or is he saying something about himself, of which his ability to sleep while they are anxious, indicates? That his faith is in his heavenly Father, and it is not the elements that he has to fear or think they might take him out? Such that if Jesus was present with them they are quite safe. Is he saying that they ought to have trusted him personally in the face of the wind and the waves?

### 39-5 The usefulness of reading the synoptic parallels

As readers of Matthew's account, these questions, might occur to us. But they are sorted by what he immediately did – he stood up, and rebuked the wind and the waves and it was completely calm.

Mark's account however, would have not left us having to think of these issues at all. For, in a way that portrays information of an eye-witness, Mark describes Jesus as being in the prow of the boat, and that he was asleep on a cushion. Mark records that they woke him to rebuke him for not caring, because he seemed oblivious, of their plight. Upon which Jesus woke up, rebuked the the

wind and the sea with the words, "Be silent, be still!" As a result the wind cut, and there was a great calm.

Then, at that time, Mark records Jesus asking, "Why are you so fearful? Don't you have faith?" So the context is with respect to himself and his care for them; and it is answered by what he has just done.

### 39-6 From fear for themselves to awe of him

Mark records that, as Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea, a great fear rose up within the disciples; so much so that they said to one another, "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" They had moved from a fear of the created elements which were hostile to them and seemed to have the power over their lives, including Jesus', as far as they could know. It was anxiety based upon the fear of what could be done to them.

Now they had found an awe concerning the rebuker of waves and sea - the man himself. And they asked the central question to which all the Gospel records drive us towards, and require us not to avoid, but to have our own answer for, "Who is Jesus?" We, as readers, can see in the disciples increasing revelation of Jesus that they are wondering here, 'who are we dealing with here, just who is our rabbi?'

### 39-7 The impact of the Gospel's presentation of the person of Jesus.

All the nature miracles recorded confront us with the Person of Jesus. They have an impact; and as we read the Gospel's keep building up this pressure for us – for we are disciples who are always growing in the depth and wonder of our perception of Him.

# nt 40 – Matthew 8.28-34

## The deliverance of a man in the Decapolis region

*Read carefully Mark 5.1-20; Luke 8.26-39, Leviticus 11.1-8*

40 -1 Textual variant - Gerasa

40-2 A man alive, but a captive, living in the cemetery

40-3 The man with an unclean spirit

40-4 A captive is drawn to run, to Jesus, to worship

40-5 Holiness encounters the unholy

40-6 The Son of God who is the coming Judge of all creation

40-7 Jesus keeps to the 'proper time'

40-8 The demons asked permission of the Son of God

40-9 The people asked Jesus to leave

40-10 The mercy of God's deliverance

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### 40 -1 Textual variant - Gerasa

Pigs are unclean animals for the Jews. The general setting is the south-eastern shore of Galilee; an especially pagan region seen as unclean because of the many pig farms there. Gadara is a town six miles from the shore, Gerasa is 30 miles south east of the lake. Was the setting of this deliverance Gerasa or Gadara?

We have textual evidence for both. Commenting on the Markan text of the United Bible Society's Greek Text edition 3, Metzger [1971] reports that the committee preferred to print Gerasa, for reasons of superior textual witness and because it was likely that Gadara is a scribal emendation thought to be an attempt to assimilate the Markan text to Matthew 8.28.

### 40-2 A man alive, but a captive, living in the cemetery

This was a meeting between Jesus and the man with a demon. Mark calls the demon an "unclean spirit". This emphasizes the defiling situation prevailing for a human individual when a demon is in possession of his body. Significantly, this will be underscored by their entry to the pigs, who self destruct, all of which takes place in an unclean territory.

Following the Markan text, we have the picture of only one man [Matthew has two] who lived among the dead [tombs]; he was socially dangerous to

others; he was also dangerous to himself in that he was self-mutilating. He was uncontrollable by any man. This description makes clear that the man was out of control, both in respect of his neighbours and of himself. He was no longer running his own life, the arena of battle being his mind; particularly the will. He was unable to make human decisions founded upon the normal reverence for life and the value of persons. Mark records, after the deliverance, that the man is restored to a sound mind.

### 40-3 The man with an unclean spirit

Athanasius teaches us, in reporting the life of Antony [para: 42], that the demons have no power to effect anything of themselves, and it is clearly certain that they cannot do us any harm after the death of the Lord on the cross, which won the victory over them. Athanasius records that Antony spoke of the importance of being guarded in our life, pointing out that when Satan found Job guarded and fenced about by God he left him, yet, finding Judas unguarded, he took him captive.

Antony explains that when demons come to us, they approach us in a form that corresponds to the state in which they discover us, adapting their delusions to the condition of mind they find in us. Should they find us fearful, timid or confused, then they increase our terror with their threats. It will be observed then, that the voice of the demons is also the voice of the man. There is a correspondence.

### 40-4 A captive is drawn to run, to Jesus, to worship

This man was in a very 'taken over' state; self-destructive to the extreme. And yet it was this very man, Mark records who, seeing Jesus from a long way off, ran to him and worshipped him. This was the action of the man, not the demon. No demon does this; as we see later, Jesus is a torment to the demon.

He ran under the impact of the merciful grace of God. God was drawing him to Himself in the person of his Son, enabling him to respond to Jesus with much stronger power than his resident demons could bring to bear.

That he was drawn to Jesus indicated that he was such as may come. The Gospel record here makes clear to anyone among us, who can fall under the wicked powers, that we may come to Jesus to worship. That is, there is no self-interest here in the deranged man. He was not coming for deliverance *per se*; he had come to worship. That He was delivered as he worshiped was fitting – for it is so with us, it is access to the person of God, freely given, that works our sanctification, our cleansing.

## 40-5 Holiness encounters the unholy

The demon was bold to defile the man, expressing its malicious control over his life; until it met a proper man as the man met Jesus. Here, as the man worshiped, the demon, because resident, was forced to face up to Jesus who is obedient to his Father as Son and to his God as man. And here we learn that the demons themselves are truly afraid of a proper man. Where fallen, disobedient men fear the demons, thinking them to have power, we now see a reversal made evident.

In the response of the man in the synagogue at Nazareth [nt30], we saw that the correct situation is that the demons have deep fear of a man whose life is as the 'holy One of God' because born of God, yet who also, as an act of will, obeys and lives a holy, undefiled life within. This we saw to be the emphasis of the former deliverance that Mark recorded for us.

## 40-6 The Son of God who is the coming Judge of all creation

Here, the issue is the 'Son of God'. To meet Jesus, albeit in a man over whom it has a control, is for the demon to bear witness, unwillingly, that there is nothing it has in common with a godly man – "what have I to do with you" – and further, under the impact of Jesus' presence, the question 'have you come to torment me?' is forcefully extracted.

In the Markan text, under that impact of encountering Jesus, terror of coming judgment [so Matthew] was engendered in the demon. Under deep torment, the demon was unwillingly forced to declare the truth of the matter, he declared Jesus to be the 'Son of the most high God'.

Notice that the torment that came was due to the presence of the person of Jesus. This speaks to us of the *parousia*, the presencing of God amongst us. It is the person of Jesus that constitutes the torment of the demon, because where the presence of the King is there is the rule, or the kingdom of God. So the demon, according to Matthew, registered the presence of Jesus as if the judgment had come before the 'proper time' [2 Peter 2.4; Revelation 12.12].

The demon had a time frame in which his clear knowledge of his coming judgment was assured and a settled matter. What terrorized him, and caused his surprise, was that it had come before that time.

## 40-7 Jesus keeps to the 'proper time'

In the gracious days of the coming of the Son of God for us and for our salvation, we see Jesus is not forcing the times of God – He is keeping to the

issue of the moment. He has come to set us free from the demons and to plunder Satan's house. He will have the demon out of the man – that is the issue of the moment, the salvation of men and women. Other things will follow in their order and in their proper time. So, for the moment, the demons may stay in their local place, but *out of* the man.

## 40-8 The demons ask permission of the Son of God

Another evidence now appears in this episode. As Job informed us, in the Old Testament, Satan himself, as a created, high-ranking angel, required the permission of God if he wished to attack Job.

This Legion of demons [6000?] understood they would be cast out of their place where they had been using the body of the man for their destructive, malicious purposes. They begged for permission to enter the pig herd. As Jesus said “Go” they enter the pigs and the herd was seen to rush down into the sea and were destroyed. Mark says that there were 2000 pigs involved.

This does not teach us that Jesus is cruel to the animals, for they are also his creatures. The new creation will follow the salvation of men and women in the proper order.

What this action demonstrated is the glory of God in the deliverance of a captured man. The demise of the animals made the transference of the demons manifest to the eyes of the local people. True, the man restored in his right mind would also say that, but it was this transference that showed this to be a deliverance and not a healing.

## 40-9 The people ask Jesus to leave

The pig farmers were “afraid” according to Mark. The handling of such defeating matters as the deranged local man - known to all - was an awesome matter; for the deliverance is instant, and the change in the man was as immediate as it was marked. He was restored to their society as a person who was set free to be among them in a proper way – he was restored to normal human exchanges [see the parallel to the leper in *nt36-5*].

Further, if there is a commercial loss involved here in the deliverance of the man it was the very large herd of pigs. They might even blame Jesus about that! We, the readers, know that it was the demons that requested they should stay in the area. From what we understand above [*40-3*], perhaps the demons have an opportunity for their purposes where men are constantly ignoring the “uncleaness” of pigs as an animal [Leviticus 11.1-8].

Either way, Jesus did give his permission. Larger themes were playing out here than the commercial interests of men and women. The deliverance of men and

women will radically re-orientate the lives and interests of all who are saved. The delivered one is manifestly focused upon his deliverer; the locals, while they had suffered a loss, in commercial terms, had seen God in action for one of his little ones.

Nevertheless, they asked him to go away, the very One who by his coming and subsequent death would enable their commercial enterprise and a way of life that would abolish the clean/unclean distinction and so legitimize their farming life as a true and proper way to live; where demons no longer had an edge.

### 40-10 The mercy of God' deliverance; Jesus is the Lord.

The man wanted to follow Jesus. But following is a matter of call and not of simply being a recipient – leastways, at this point in the Gospel story. It is, of course, true that all disciples are recipients of God's mercy.

If grace comes to us in Jesus Christ's person, granting us what we cannot earn; then mercy, which comes through the same person, is bringing us a state of affairs that we did not deserve. The mercy of deliverance is that we have been plucked out from a net in which we have enmeshed ourselves. A net where malicious enemies have taken advantage of us, in such a way as to express their own wickedness and compound ours. Jesus instructs this man to go and testify of the mercy of the Lord.

He did. And Mark causes us to understand that, though Jesus commanded him to speak of what *the Lord* [= God] had done for him, what he actually said was what *Jesus* had done for him. Men, who are restored and now of right mind, in their report of the actions of God on their behalf, can say that Jesus is Lord. Mark wants us to know that what that man did was by the Spirit just as it is when we say so, being of sound mind and mercifully delivered.

# nt 41 – Mark 2.1-12

## The healing of a paralytic in Capernaum

*Read carefully Matthew 9.1-8; Luke 5.17-26;  
2 Chronicles 7.14; Psalm 103.3; 147.3; Isaiah 19.22; 38.17; 57.18*

- 41 -1 Great crowds around the door*
- 41-2 Jesus is aware of their trust in him*
- 41-3 Forgiveness is the central issue of reconciliation*
- 41-4 Jesus replaces the scribe's question with his question*
- 41-5 His question linked together forgiveness and healing*
- 41-6 The Son of man, the authorized forgiver of sins on the earth*
- 41-7 God is glorified in a new way*

### 41 -1 Great crowds around the door

We follow Mark's text as our primary focus for the next seven readings. Following upon the healing of the leper recorded in Mark 1.40-45, Mark now presents two healings, two questions put to Jesus and also the call of Matthew.

The setting of this healing was in Capernaum, where there was a large crowd gathered. Four friends of a paralysed man are presented with a dilemma; how shall they gain access to Jesus since their friend is lying on a bed? Carrying the bed is all the more difficult due to the crowd.

Jesus was obviously inside the house and, having some sense as to where Jesus was standing, they ascended to the roof. After undoing the fabric of the roof above the place where they judged Jesus to be standing, they let the man down from the ceiling.

### 41-2 Jesus is aware of their trust in him

In the pressing crowd, the bed was lowered to Jesus. As the four friends looked down from the roof, Jesus was able to bend over the bed of the paralysed man. Mark records that Jesus registered their faith, whether that refers to all five



of them or to the four bearers only, is unclear.

### 41-3 Forgiveness is the central issue of reconciliation

Addressing the man unable to live an active life, Jesus declared to the man that his sins were forgiven, addressing him as “son” who was hearing a reconciling and restorative word from his father.

In this way, Jesus makes it clear that the central issue in the good news of the gospel is the forgiveness of our sins. This is the same theme that John the Baptist encouraged the people of Israel to come to expect from God as the Messiah, to Whom he testified. Hidden matters of the heart are primary, for they go to the source of the rebellion of men and women against God. Forgiveness here is a gracious offer, which is conveyed to men who trust Jesus. It is not conditional on repentance, but when simply given, it will lead to repentance as a fruit of the reconciliation it declares.

The paralytic would have known, deep within himself, that the forgiveness declared was real to his life, it would have been an actual experience to him - as it is to us.

We, the readers, expect the healing of the man to take place, and so we find this dealing with forgiveness of sins something unusual in the immediate context, but not in the general context of Jesus’ life and mission which we are beginning to understand.

### 41-4 Jesus replaces the scribe’s question with his question

The account flows straight on to the revelation of private thoughts of the scribes who have just witnessed what Jesus said. Taking him to mean that he, Jesus, was forgiving the man’s sins, they either thought this meant he was speaking *for* God or he was speaking *as* God; this was, in their opinion, blasphemy - only God forgives sins and only He can declare it. Mark will re-visit this theme of blasphemy, as applied to Jesus, later [14.61-64], where it becomes the basis of the Sanhedrin’s accusation against Jesus.

So, through the exposure of these hidden thoughts a larger question – the key one, is now brought to the light; “Who is Jesus?” Jesus, intuitively knowing the question that was disturbing their thinking, displaced that question by directly asking another. “Is it easier to say, ‘your sins are forgiven’, or is it easier to say ‘get up, take your bed and walk’?”

### 41-5 His question linked together forgiveness and healing

Jesus appears to be implying, by his question, that the saying of forgiveness

and the commanding of healing are of the same degree of difficulty; if one may be done, then the other.

Now, in former times, there was a clear connection between healing and forgiveness; healing often was the demonstration of the forgiveness that was granted. [2 Chronicles 7.14; Psalm 103.3; 147.3; Isaiah 19.22; 38.17; 57.18].

There are texts in the Old Testament that use forgiveness and healing as interchangeable terms – “heal me for I have sinned against You” [Psalm 41.4]. Both Jeremiah [3.22] and Hosea [14.4] speak of God’s healing His people’s sinful falling back into sin.

By his question, Jesus has introduced into their minds that whether it was healing or forgiveness, both are works of God and the one bears witness to the other. The difference for the scribes, who could not check the subjective experience of the paralytic, was that they could visibly see a healing – for then it was a sign - and so they could know that the subjective experience was likely to have been equally real.

## 41-6 The Son of man, the authorised forgiver of sins on the earth

Jesus’ question proposed just that very difference. So he made the testimony to the scribes a matter of his clear purpose. He declared his intention to give them an externally verifiable thing to see – a sign; which would bear witness to the reality of the forgiveness declared to the paralysed man. The sign would also show something else; that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

This is the only place in the Gospels where the pardoning of sins is attributed to the Son of Man. It can only be in the light of the resurrection that the early church recognized the full extent of Jesus’ authority.

## 41-7 God is glorified in a new way

The scribes, in the healing of the man, now had a demonstration that the forgiveness offered to the man, while still paralysed, had been real. It is true that now they may “know” that what Jesus said to the man was internally as real to him as the healed body was externally obvious to them.

The people gave God glory. But they added something else that they are recognised. They said, “we never saw it this way [thus] before”. That is, the connection between forgiveness and healing was not known; God had long ago established these connections for them and their fathers. But they understood that this way of it coming, when it is done “thus”, that is, for them, was new.

What they may have been caused to acknowledge, along with the

targeted scribes, was that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Now *that* is new. It is even new for God – for while God is always the Father of the Son, His eternal Word, and He is this eternally and always; but it is a new thing for God to take flesh and come as man. It has not been done “thus” before in God, nor before amongst men and women. It had never been seen before this.

## nt 42 – Mark 2.13-17

### The Call of Levi [Matthew]

*Read carefully Matthew 9.9-13; Luke 5.27-32; Hosea 6.6*

42 -1 A customs officer named Levi/Matthew

42-2 Jesus' call to follow is for sinners

42-3 Call to shared life; table fellowship

42-4 Jesus diagnosis of the Pharisee's religion

#### 42 -1 A customs officer named Levi/Matthew

A “publican” [δημοσιώτης] was usually a Roman of equestrian rank. A customs officer was usually a Jewish person acting as subordinate officials. This is what Mark's Greek word τελώνης means.

Levi's base was located at Capernaum, it being the first important location which travellers from the territory of Herod Philip and from the Decapolis would encounter. So Levi [Matthew] would be a Jewish tax official working for Herod Antipas. He would be a despised person, particularly because he was collecting poll-tax which allowed for greater profit margins as these men collected taxes at bridges, canals and roads. Here the customs levied were probably on fish, fruit and other produce that were the exports and imports of Capernaum.

Levi is the name given in Luke 5.27, and the Codex D calls him Levi the son of Alphaeus. If this is so then he would be the brother of James, whose name appears with him in a group of four in the list. Matthew is the name in Matthew's gospel and he is identified as the “tax-collector” when his name later

appears in the list of the apostles of Jesus in Matthew 10.3.

## 42-2 Jesus' call to follow is for sinners

As we saw in **nt24 & 35**, the call of Jesus is a gracious call that would take the person quite by surprise. In fact, what is common to particularly **nt35** and this section is that we are left in no doubt that the call comes to sinners.

## 42-3 Call to shared life; table fellowship

The call of Jesus to his disciples was one of shared life with him. Jesus' accessibility to his own disciples was natural. But when it became clear that among his disciples were the sinners of the day, this stood out in sharp contrast to the Pharisees – the separated ones – whose code was to maintain their own righteousness and holiness by not eating or fraternizing with the 'publicans and sinners'; just the very people who were typically in Matthew's connection. Indeed, it seems to the Pharisees that the disciple is leading the master here – for they ask the disciples about Jesus' practice of eating with the publicans, - the Roman, occupying foreigners and the Jewish tax collectors.

"Sinners" in the technical jargon of the Pharisees stood for those who either could not, because they were ignorant, or would not because of the overwhelming burden involved, observe the intricacies of the Jewish law as marked out by the traditions of the scribes.

## 42-4 Jesus' diagnosis of the Pharisee's religion

Jesus has a sympathetic approach to these "sinners" – indeed, in Matthew 23, [see **nt221-223**], at the close of his ministry, he laid out a powerful critique and condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, speaking of them as burdensome people, blind guides, who are not discerning. They were the great blockers of people seeking to enter the kingdom of God.

[1] When he heard of the questioning of the disciples about his eating with sinners, his reply took an ironic, even sarcastic, condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees. Speaking of them as those who see themselves as "whole", Jesus made clear he had not come for the healthy but for the sick. He was the physician of the broken and the despised, and he could do that if he was not with them and they with him.

[2] He referred back to the Old Testament expression of the religious worship of God that He had rejected; worship that God hated and that made him sick. People had come to use the sacrifices of God mechanically. They had failed to remember that the sacrifices that God originally gave to them were a gracious

way to maintenance their relationship with God when they had sinned.

Religiously relying on this sort of worship was man-centred, and looked for the glory in man to be noticed by one another. God's answer at the time was through the prophet Hosea when He said "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" [Hosea 6.6] [See also *nt44*]. Jesus said that the same word applied to the Pharisees and the scribes in his day – they had forgotten that God was merciful, giving us what we do not deserve, and that he wanted his people to live that way with one another. The traditional religionists here were without mercy on their brethren.

[3] Jesus said that he has no call for the 'righteous' - by which he means those who are righteous in their own eyes, hence the scribes and Pharisees. He only had a call for 'sinners' – the religiously rejected of the scribes and Pharisees and those who made no claim to justify themselves, but admitted their sin and acknowledged that God's judgment on them, if it should come, was true.

The Pharisees and the scribes were wilfully blind to their own situation. Their view of themselves as whole and spiritually healthy; their lack of mercy expressed by their condemnation of their brethren and withdrawal from them as a contaminating influence to their own life, and their view of themselves as righteous was mistaken. In Jesus' estimation they were a sickening leaven, a corrupting influence, and they should not be listened to or followed.

They did not have any share in Jesus' medicine, nor his mercy, nor his call to follow him, nor a share the life of the kingdom.

## nt 43 – Mark 2.18-22

### A question about fasting

*Read carefully Matthew 9.14-17; Luke 5.33-39*

43-1 Differing practices of differing disciple groups

43-2 Fasting is not self-referred; it is a relational issue

43-3 It is a question of timing because a question of presence

43-4 Jesus' awareness of growing opposition

43-5 Jesus' active and passive ministry.

43-6 Fundamentally incompatible systems of old and new

### 43-1 Differing practices of differing disciple groups

John the Baptist's disciples had to come to terms with the ministry of Jesus. They noticed that the disciples of the Pharisees fast, and they fast themselves, but Jesus' disciples did not. Why was this?

Jesus did not attempt to answer the question with respect to the disciples of the Pharisees; he confined his answer to the contrast between John's disciples and his own. But he lumped together the Pharisees and John's disciples as sharing a practice of fasting in a mechanical way as a religious exercise.

### 43-2 Fasting is not self-referred; it is a relational issue

Leaving aside the false use of fasting which Jesus sees in the two groups, the reason for fasting is best seen in the life of Israel. It may be done as a response to a calamity, or to God's disturbance with Israel, or to their need to repent, or some disaster that has fallen upon them. It was an action taken by the people of God and was evoked in relation to what God was doing. As Jesus made clear in this exchange, fasting was appropriate to mourning.

In the New Testament, there is a good example of fasting as response to a God-given sense of inability to do things out of our own strength. It is found in Acts 13.1-3 [see **nt337**]. As the prophets and teachers at Antioch were fasting and ministering to the Lord, the Holy Spirit made clear the call of Barnabas and Saul. Then the group responded to this movement of the Spirit by fasting and laying hands on them. The fasting expressed their response to what God was calling these men to do. They fasted, for they were aware of the deep need of Paul and Barnabas for the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the task which, as the Spirit of Christ, He had called them to do. They were initially fasting as they worshipped the Lord, for they needed to do that in His power, for they had none of their own.

### 43-3 It is a question of timing because a question of presence

Jesus' questioners, in their mechanical use of self-serving fasting were found mourning at the wrong time. If they had been responding to what God was doing then they would have been aware of the wonderful age of the Messiah that had arrived with his presence. It would have been like a marriage feast – a joyful occasion.

The point of the relationship between the "sons of the bridegroom" and the "bridegroom" was that these friends of the groom set their mood and their celebratory attitude in response to the presence of the bridegroom with them.

In which case it was party time – it was not a time for mourning, there was no need to express sorrow. It would have been untimely for the wedding guests to fall into sorrow and mourning while the feast was on. So this was his answer to the question; it was not the time to fast, that would be a totally inappropriate thing to do at that time.

### 43-4 Jesus' awareness of growing opposition

However, the growing opposition to Jesus from the Jewish authorities would soon bring the time of Jesus and his disciples being together to an end. Then the disciples of Jesus would mourn in that day, and that will be the time for fasting – to express the mourning – because the bridegroom would have been taken away from his disciples.

### 43-5 Jesus' active and passive ministry.

This opens up a distinction we are accustomed to make between the active ministry of Jesus and the passive ministry. At the early sections of the Gospels which we are currently reading, then we are seeing that Jesus is taking the initiative. At his very presence the demons are reacting, the questioning challenges of the religious people are being met, and pushed back, with declarations and miracles of healing and deliverance. The nature miracles which are being done by Jesus are declaring to the disciples that there is someone here among them who is overwhelmingly wonderful.

But a time is coming when, in the Gospel record, after the awareness of the disciples has the revelation to see that they have the Messiah among them, that Jesus begins to teach them that He is the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 40-55 - He is the servant of the Lord, who represents the whole of Israel, and He will accordingly suffer. So the passion of the lord, as He set his face towards Jerusalem, was presented as his passion - His suffering.

Then, at that time, others will act on Him in a way that He is passive, and is judged by them, mocked by them, condemned by them, and all of this He will yield to - for it is the Father's way to bring salvation for those He came to save. As Jesus foretold here in the early part of the Gospel record, the time for partying will turn to mourning - because His current presence will turn to a clear absence. Then they will grieve and mourn - and so fast.

### 43-6 Fundamentally incompatible systems of old and new

In **nt42-4**, Jesus critiqued and condemned the religion of the Pharisees and

scribes. Jesus now expressed his awareness of the incompatibility of old Israel - overloaded with religious burdens of petty regulations that come from the traditions of men and set in a self-righteousness that is crippling – with the New Israel that was being called out by Him, aware of its sin, humble and trusting the Messiah and receiving forgiveness gratefully.

He illustrated this incompatibility with two picture-stories; both of which show that it is destructive to try and mix the old with the new. An unshrunk cloth, used to patch an old garment will simply tear away and make a worse tear. New, fresh wine needs new pliable and expandable wineskins for it to mature; it cannot be put into old wineskins, they could not hold it, they will burst. The new wine of the kingdom grace would be lost if anyone attempted to mix it with the old legalism of Israel's religion.

## nt 44 – Mark 2.23-28

### A debate in the cornfields on a sabbath

*Read carefully Matthew 12.1-8; Luke 6.1-5; 1 Samuel 21.1-6; 2 Samuel 8.18; 1 Chronicles 24.6*

*44-1 Two possible centres in a relationship*

*44-2 Sabbath: being and doing, who we are and what we do.*

*44-3 Obedient sons know the Person and so wisely handle the rules*

*44-4 Sabbath is made for man, not the reverse*

*44-5 ...so that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath*

#### 44-1 Two possible centres in a relationship

It is possible to “keep the commandments” in two ways.

The first understands rule-keeping as really something about yourself. You can begin with the rule as a word that has been spoken. You need to focus upon and be clear about what it practically means. But in keeping the rule, it is really about what it means “to you” which is central. And so you “do it” really for your own sake; either because you fear punishment for not doing it, or because you understand the rule to be helpful to your life. In both cases you are self-centred, and the “keeping of the rule” is to your advantage.

This way of keeping of the rules imprisons us in our self centred orientation and it is pre-occupied with a view of the rule-giver as a condemnatory person



who is seeking to punish us for failure to obey.

The second way understands rule keeping as really something about your relation to someone else. In this case the “rules” are to be obeyed because they are the word of a gracious and merciful person, who has provided them for our good; they are expressions of his love. To honour that person is to keep their word. So there is no motivation to obey the person for any other reason than they are who they are and you are related to them. This is an other-centred approach; it centres the reason for keeping the rule upon someone else, and when obedience is offered to them we find ourselves looking away from ourselves to them. This is a form of obedience which, as it is done, has the effect of setting us free from ourselves; although we would not do for that reason.

## 44-2 Sabbath: being and doing, who we are and what we do.

In the eternal life of the one God, who is Father Son and Spirit, God is always the Father of the Son; that is the relational truth concerning the internal relations of the Trinity as it relates to Being of God. The Church learned to express this by saying that the Son is *eternally begotten* of the Father.

So, while God is always Father, He was not always Creator. His creation of the world was a decision He took out of his own freedom to act, without any need to do so. And when He made the world out of nothing, God brought it, and us, into existence through his Word and by the Spirit.

Our, and the world's, creation He made as a “work” of his own. It is not an extension of His being – that would lead us to think of pantheism. Rather, the creation is a work of God done directed towards what is “outside” of God's own internal relations. The universe is dependent upon God for its being and for its sustained life; yet it is a work distinct from Himself.

While God was in the act of creating and ordering the universe, he confined that “working period” to what He presents as six days of action. And then He “rested” for one day, the seventh. When we say that God “rests” we don't project upon Him our own fallen and creaturely understandings of ‘being tired’, as if He was in need of ‘recreation’.

It is the distinction between purposeful activity and a time when nothing is “done”. If God can work and rest then He makes a distinction, for our sakes, between what He does and who He is. Who He is, does not arise out of his working, but the reverse. For Who He was, *before* He became the Creator of the universe, is to focus upon the internal relations of the Trinity. When He acts, the direction of the action is towards those matters outside His own Being.

When He commanded Israel, as His covenant people, to “keep *my* Sabbaths”

He was granting them a participation, a sharing of His life style. He was, in calling them to this sharing of His way of “working-resting”, pointing them to the fact that they were made in His image and that they could mirror His life in a direct and concrete way. It was a powerful statement to us all that who we are, and what we do, are never to be confused, nor amalgamated.

After the Fall and the rebellious life-style of toiling to live had come to be our situation, then the Sabbath “rest” became a gracious provision that provided a respite for the covenant people. It refreshed their persons, their land and their animals. It became the basis for their calendar and their sabbatical years. Constantly, it recalled them to who they were and who their God was – as they kept their sabbaths as an obedient reflection of His “Sabbath”.

### 44-3 Obedient sons know the Person and so wisely handle the rules

The Pharisees’ objection to Jesus’ disciples eating from the cornfields as they passed through them, was that it was an activity in breach of the regulations of God about the Sabbath – and it was a breach coloured by their own understanding and practice of the Sabbath.

David was a man Scripture declared to be a man “after God’s own heart”. It is a way of delineating David as a God-centred man, focussed on the Person he is obeying, pre-occupied with feeling as God feels, wanting what God wants. In short, David is a pattern of a true son who participates in the internal life of his father as well as sharing in the work on which they are together engaged.

Jesus referred the Pharisees to the practice of David who, functioning as a true son, had the confident attitude of a man who knew God. He was able to cut through the regulations for the priests and to feed his men from the shewbread which was exclusively for God. Doing God’s mission meant that he could eat God’s bread – share his table, participate in his life. David declared his intimacy and sure-footedness about God in this action – according to Jesus.

In a way that indicates David’s approach to the law of God to be the second way discussed in 44-1 above, Jesus went to the heart of the Pharisaical pre-occupation with law from their fearful and self-centred base. He simply indicated that they had missed the sonship which David knew. When they took issue with Jesus’ disciples for their picking of the corn [‘harvesting’?] so that they could eat, Jesus answer is at the level – “David would have understood and approved”.

### 44-4 Sabbath is made for man, not the reverse.

Making clear that the Sabbath was a gift of God for the good of man,

Jesus accused the Pharisees of a self-referred distortion. They had projected upon God their thoughts that the keeping of Sabbaths was somehow something that God needed. Along the lines that He needed our obedience as something necessary to Himself and His life. If they disobeyed, somehow God's life would be depleted.

If the Sabbath is made for man, it is the provision of God for man's good, as are all the laws of God to man. Man is not made for the Sabbath; that would construe the creation of man as something God did so that He could see His rules obeyed. That puts God in the place of a tyrant, Who gets some delight out of expressing his power over man. Their view of God was showing!

## 44-5 ...so that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath

Jesus has brought us a revelation of the Father because He is his Son; only God can reveal God. As we shall see, when we come to those pivotal texts of **nt80**, the mutual relations between the Father and the Son are holy and exclusive. And only the Son reveals the Father and only the Father reveals the Son. Jesus is the Word of God incarnate, Who opens up matters that draw us into the very internal Life of God.

When Jesus spoke about himself as Lord of the Sabbath He was making a claim. He had corrected the Pharisees' perceptions, but He went on to speak of his own person. David showed that he had the freedom to move as a truly obedient son; he had penetrated to the heart of God and lived out of that revelation with the liberty of a son.

Jesus is Son of God by virtue of sharing God's Being. To be "Lord" [= God] of the Sabbath opened up to his listeners a relationship He has within the internal relations of the Godhead.

However, this Lordship of the Sabbath, the grammar tells us, is a result of the truth that the Sabbath was made for man. So God's provision for man, and man's answering reception of it, is found in Jesus' person.

As Son of man - in both the Ezekiel's and Daniel's double presentation - the person of Jesus is presented to us as the proper man who is God. For He is not only the Word of God to man; He is the word of man to God. Because of our sin we cannot make the proper responses to God; but Jesus, the proper man, makes them for us. He did this throughout his life lived on the earth by decisions of his own will. Further, as the proper obedient, true man – without ceasing to be God – He is the Lord of the Sabbath; such a thing could only be said of One who truly God and truly man, having two natures in the one person.

## nt 45/6 – Mark 3.1-12

### The man with the withered hand and other healings

*Read carefully Matthew 12.9-14,15-21; Luke 6.6-11, 17-19*

*45/6 -1 Accusers are confronted*

*45/6 -2 Lawful to do good or harm; save life or kill?*

*44/6 -3 The 'anger' and 'grief' of Jesus*

*45/6-4 Grace comes in the face of rejection and opposition*

*45/6-5 ...large crowds...from afar*

#### 45/6 -1 Accusers are confronted

On the Sabbath, working men are around. People can gather, and have leisure to meet and engage with one another. Mark makes clear for us, the readers, that the context of the man's withered hand being healed was a hostile setting. Jesus now had some watchers who were looking for a basis to accuse him. Specifically, as to whether he would heal on a Sabbath day.

That Jesus calls the deformed man into the centre before he asked the question of the would-be accusers indicates that he intended to confront this issue of healing on the Sabbath.

#### 45/6 -2 Lawful to do good or harm; save life or kill?

Jesus' question to his accusers goes to the heart of the care and concern of God for men and women. In regard to the law, does its purpose reflect a good God or a destroying God? What sort of God did you have in mind when you thought to accuse me about healing? Let alone healing on the Sabbath?

Everyone present would have known that the law of Moses permitted a man to pull his animal out of a ditch if it had fallen into it on a Sabbath day. They understood that. Their view of God is revealed. Could the opponents be so wrong in suggesting that?

The answer lay in their deep desire to accuse Jesus – for the works He was doing were not so much unlawful as they advanced the people's awareness of Jesus' person. The Pharisees held their peace. They didn't say anything because

they knew his question was right. But their accusations were not about upholding God's order, even as they interpreted it. It was a matter of getting their man accused.

So, Jesus' question went to the accusers' motive. They were *using* the law, not obeying it. They had an agenda, which was himself, not God's honour nor man's compliance to law.

### 44/6 -3 The 'anger' and 'grief' of Jesus

Such a use of his Father's law for man's own motives and agendas stirred up the anger of Jesus. He looked at them and was angry about what they were doing. But there was another side to this anger. The text says that he was angry "being grieved" at the hardening of their heart.

What Jesus was experiencing, in order of the text, was first deep grief at the fact that these accusing folks had set their inner man to hold to what they intend – they wanted to accuse him.

In Scripture, we are used to the hardening of hearts by God, which refers to Him responding to their response –their refusal - of an offer of repentance. Here, we are dealing with the first movement in that chain. These folks had set their will to go down a course by which they intended to see Jesus brought before the law and the judgment of men. What grieved Jesus was that this was a course of action that would array themselves as opposed to the grace of God standing before them in his person. This was to set their heart so that it stayed without change. It was the decision to hold their line.

This was an anger that arises from grief at the rejection of the wonderful grace of God. It is the beginning of the understanding of the "wrath of the Lamb" as we see it mentioned in the Revelation of John – a wrath of unwavering, costly love that finds such grief in the rejection of its best concerns and outgoing love for man.

### 45/6-4 Grace comes in the face of rejection and opposition

Notwithstanding their hardening rejection of him, Jesus went on to act even in the face of this opposition. He commanded the man to stretch out his hand. Notice that this healing took place simply through the word of Jesus telling the man to do something. Jesus himself did not do any action that might be construed as work, nor did the man. His hand was "restored"; that is, returned to him as a useful member.

How amazing, that on a Sabbath day, when work was not being done, a man, who could not work effectively before this, had his ability to work without hindrance restored as his hand was healed.

### 45/6-5 ...large crowds...from afar

There was now a wide response to Jesus, people were coming up from Jerusalem, Judea, Idumea and around Jordan. The northern coastal sectors of Tyre and Sidon were being drawn to Jesus. They were hearing of him by report of others. The crowds pressed in on him and he taught from a boat, as he had done before – it gave him some distance and allowed his voice carry over the water.

The unclean spirits were speaking out that Jesus is the “Son of God” – He forbade them to speak that. As we have noted in 44-5 concerning the texts **nt80**, Jesus waits for the disciples to come to understand who He is, which will be a work of revelation made known by his Father in heaven. Meanwhile he would not be upstaged by the demons now; even though revelation is itself a matter of inward appropriation, not simply the hearing of a title coming from a mouth as through a demon. He shut that speaking of the spirits down.

## nt 47 – Mark 3.13-19a

### The appointment of the twelve

*Read carefully Matthew 10.1-4; Luke 6.12-16*

47-1 *The settings of Matthew and Luke*

47-2 *...on a mountain...called ...they went*

47-3 *...[1] that they might be with him...*

47-4 *...[2] that he might send them out to preach*

### 47-1 The settings of Matthew and Luke

Luke follows the Markan order while Matthew conflates this appointment with the mission of the twelve. Mark will wait until the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter before he deals with the mission.

Luke also, as is his constant emphasis, makes it clear that Jesus had retired to the mountain to pray, and had spent all night in prayer before the appointment of the twelve. Are we to understand the 'call' to be the call to come up onto the mountain?

## 47 -2 ...on a mountain...called ...they went

Jesus took the initiative to go up to a mountain. Mark records this, aware that it has powerful connotations of Moses, who, on being summoned, ascended Sinai to the intimacy and meeting with God. Is this theme what controls the Lukan mission of the seventy – mirroring the seventy elders with Moses.

This much is clear; Moses and others were called up on the mountain to be with God; here the call is to go up into a mountain to meet and be with Jesus. The parallel is obvious.

It is also a clear that this would be time when the disciples and Jesus are alone. This seems to be a withdrawal of the inner group of disciples, but it may be that others came as well and the appointment of the 12 was witnessed by them.

Mark understands that he "called" whoever he would. The call to follow, as we have seen already is a call of grace to those without a rabbi. It was at the will of Jesus that such men would be called and therefore appointed. It is clear that none of these men were without the call. They were not volunteers who imposed themselves; not even Judas Iscariot.

They "went"; for the response to the call was the drawing of God upon their life and they were in a place to know the wonderful honour that he had bestowed on them in that call. They were aware of their sin, yet they still went, as we have seen.

## 47 -3 ...[1] that they might be with him...

Mark's grammar expresses two clauses of purpose; these state the reasons why Jesus appointed them: [1] that they might be with him and, [2] that he might send them out to preach.

The presence of Jesus offered to the disciples an access to him that others were not appointed to share. Even within the twelve, there was the inner group of Peter, James and John. It was this privilege of being "with him" that became the basis for the witness they would afterwards give, having been with him from the beginning, from John's baptism [Acts 1.21-22].

What we mustn't miss here is that if he called them to be with him it was equally true that he had given himself to them as a gift of God's grace. That is,

to be with a person is not just to gather round, it is to share life and work. This idea of Jesus giving himself to them is actually the giving of the key to the kingdom of God - for it is the gift of the King. If they were faithful to this gift, the same gift, in the glorified Jesus, would also be their reward [John 17.24].

Later, we shall see that we experience His Kingship through the Ascension and the coming of the Spirit to us, nevertheless, here it is apparent already, the kingdom was given in the gift of the person of Jesus to them.

## 47-4 ...[2] that he might send them out to preach

The second purpose of the appointment was that there was a task to be done, there was a share in his work for these men. The first purpose, to be with him, actually became the ground for the second. Mark treats the sending out of the disciples in chapter 6.

Their share in his work was subsequent to the experience of being with him. What they would find is that the shared life, that they had with Jesus, would be the reason that they could speak and do things. They would be in a place to "learn" Jesus – not just about him.