Mark - Commentaries by William John Hocking, Editor

The Believer's Monthly Magazine: Volume 3, Gospel of Mark., The

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Chapters 4:10-20.1

10AND when he was alone those about him with the twelve asked (of) him the parables. 11And he said to them, To you (it) is given (to know) the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those (that are) without all (these) things are done in parables; 12That seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest perhaps they should be converted and they should be forgiven (their sins). 13And he saith to them, Know ye not this parable? and how (then) will ye be acquainted with all the parables? 14The sower soweth the word. 15And these are they beside the way (side) where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately cometh Satan and taketh away the word that hath been sown in them (their hearts). 16And these are they likewise which are sown on the rocky [places]; who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy, 17and have no root in themselves, but are temporary; then tribulation coming or persecution on account of the word, immediately they are stumbled. 18And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that hear the word, 19and the cares of the age, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20And these are they that were sown on the good ground, such as hear the word and receive [it], and bear fruit, one thirty (fold), one sixty, and one a hundred.

Notes and Suggestions.

Verse 10. — Alone. The sense is that the Lord was not at that moment engaged in public service. So Luke 9:18.

Verse 11. — The mystery of the kingdom of God. A “mystery” in Biblical phraseology is a secret that cannot be discovered unless it be revealed. Many truths concealed through the Old Testament times are revealed in the New (See Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3, 9; 6:19; Colossians 1:26; and other passages). Here the “mystery” was the special truth regarding the effect of Christ’s teaching. Being delivered in a parabolic form, it could not be understood until the Lord revealed the explanation. Its meaning He proceeded to make known to the disciples, but not to the multitude, because He was still offering Himself to them as their Messiah. Compare the dreams of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, which were unintelligible without the divine interpretation.

Without. Perhaps referring to the outside of the house where He was. But “without” also has the moral significance of being outside the pale of favor (1 Cor. 5:12,13; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Tim. 3:7; Rev. 22:15).

Verse 12. — See and not perceive; hear and not understand. The reference here is to the prophecy in Isaiah 6. of the judicial blinding of the nation upon the rejection of Christ (That Isaiah then saw the glory of Christ, see John 12:41). The solemn judgment warned of by the prophet and by the Lord Himself did not fall upon Israel until the utmost limit of patient grace was reached (Acts 28:25-28). It may help to observe that the verse applies exclusively to those who reject Christ. Such are “without.” They hear the word in parables. They hear of the sower, of the seed, and of the soils, but they fail to understand because they are not among those who receive the Lord and consequently get His own interpretation.

Lest they should be forgiven. See note on Mark 3:29. “The Lord does not mean to say here that a soul might not believe in Jesus individually, and thus be forgiven; but that the nation, having rejected the testimony of Jesus, was now deserted of God, left outside, and exposed to His judgment.”

Verse 13. — Know ye not this parable? The parable of the sower was an introductory one; and if the disciples were unable to grasp that, how much less would they be able to enter fully into the instruction still to follow in a similar form. Plainly, not at all, save as the Lord might unfold the meaning to them. This He proceeded to do.

Verse 14. — The sower soweth the word. The Lord was the Sower or the Preacher, His word being the word of life, as He says, “The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). He sowed the incorruptible seed, “the word of God which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:23). John the Baptist was not a sower. “He stood in the desert and cried in the desert; for desert the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts had become. But he did not go forth to sow; he came in the way of righteousness, and pointed onward; but sowing is an act of fresh grace, introducing a new seed, by which life not there is to spring up.”

Verse 15. — Wayside hearers. Such are they who hear the word, but have not the slightest interest in what they hear. There is no effort whatever to retain the good seed. Their hearts are but a highway; earnest, loving, life-giving words pass through, but never stay. The solemn discourse goes “in one ear and out of the other.”

Satan. We might have supposed that the birds of the air would have answered to the emissaries of the evil one; but the Lord points us to the prime instigator of these thefts—Satan, or the wicked one (Matt. 13:19). The seed “never entered; it was but on the wayside: civil conversation or speculation on the discourse, perhaps admiring it, was the devil taking the seed away; for He is not speaking of opposition here.”

Verse 16. — Stony-ground hearers. These are the victims of feelings which are easily and quickly swayed. On hearing the word they receive it at once; but on affliction or persecution arising on account of it, they abandon it with the same readiness. They

Immediately receive it with joy (verse 16);

Immediately are stumbled (verse 17).

Their hearts are touched, but not their consciences. “The doctrine is received for the joy that the message brings; and when the word brings sufferings instead of joy the heart wishes no more of it.”

Verse 17. — No root in themselves. Simon Peter had (John 6:68); but there were many who showed on that occasion that they had not (John 6:66). Compare the Lord’s words to the rash scribe who said to the Lord, “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest” (Matt. 8:19, 20). He had not counted the cost.

Verse 18. — Thorny-ground hearers. These are they who seek to serve God and mammon. They lack the single eye and the undivided heart, being double-minded. The world and its things engross the heart’s attention. Business occupations, not having the “evil look of gross sin” enchain the soul; and, in result, the word is choked and there is no fruit. Such a person, though not dead, sleeps, and “does not understand spiritual things; he does not see or even enjoy them. Unhappy in the presence of spiritual Christians, he enjoys not the things they enjoy, and suffers even from reproofs of his own conscience. And if he goes with the world he suffers also in reflecting on it, his conscience reproaching him for want of faithfulness; like a sick man who suffers, he is not dead; otherwise he would not suffer; but it is a sad means of knowing that life is there.”

Verse 19. — Cares of the age. The anxieties after the necessaries of this life, to which the poor are specially subject, crush the growth and development and fruition of the spiritual life. We are to be anxious for nothing (Phil. 4:6).

The deceitfulness of riches. This is a word for the rich; for riches entwine themselves insensibly around the motives and affections, choking the word. “The more money we get, the more good we can do,” folks say. But Mammon is deceitful.

The lusts of other things. This comprehends every other worldly snare, and applies to poor and rich.

Verse 20. — Good ground. The saints at Thessalonica and Colosse are examples of those in whom the word bore fruit (Col. 1:6; 1 Thess. 1:5-10; 2:13).

THE capacity to love God is that which we get by being partakers of the divine nature.

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Chapter 4:1-9.1

1AND again he began to teach by the sea (side). And there was gathered unto him a great crowd so that he went on board ship and sat in the sea; and all the crowd were by the sea on the land. 2And he was teaching them many things in parables, and said to them in his doctrine, 3 Hear: behold, the sower went forth to sow.

4And it came to pass as he sowed, some fell beside the way (side), and the birds (of the air) came and devoured it (up). 5And other fell on the rocky [ground], where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprung up because it had no depth of earth; 6 and when the sun arose, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered (away).

7And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8And other fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing, and bore one thirty, and one sixty, and one a hundred. 9 And he said (unto them), He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Notes and Suggestions.

The parable given in this section is closely connected with the moral import of the incident which immediately precedes (3:31-35).

There it is taught that Israel’s relationship with the Lord after the flesh is broken, and only those who do God’s will are recognized, and this on account of the nation’s blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

We may trace the growth of this opposition as given in the former chapters: —

2:06	Scribes inwardly object to the Lord forgiving sins.
2:16	Scribes and Pharisees object to His eating with publicans and sinners.
2:24	Pharisees complain of disciples plucking corn on the sabbath.
3:06	Pharisees and Herodians plot to destroy Him.
3:21	His kindred say He is beside Himself.
3:22	Scribes from Jerusalem declare that He casteth out demons by Beelzebub.
3:29	This, the Lord said, could not be forgiven, being blasphemy against the Spirit.

Then the Lord immediately explains the new ground of relationship with Himself (3:31-35); and by the parable of the sower teaches the role He undertakes on that account.

This parable then skews the new character that the ministry of Jehovah's Servant would assume in consequence of the nation's rejection of Himself. It was of no avail to come to Israel as the Fruit-gatherer; an entirely new work must be begun. He presents Himself therefore as the Seed-sower. This parable is thus a descriptive sketch of the Lord's own ministry. Being delivered in parabolic form, and interpreted only to His own disciples (4:10), opportunity remained for reiterated calls to the nation to repent. This mode of teaching was greatly used by the Lord, even with the disciples to a modified extent (John 16:25), suiting especially, as it did, the time of the Gospels.

Verse 1. — Again. Compare Mark 1:16; 2:13; 3:7-9.

On board ship. The ship or boat was probably the one set apart for the Lord's use (3:9). Hence the parables then spoken are sometimes known as the "boat-parables." In Matthew 13. we have seven, in Mark 4:26-29, an eighth, and from Mark 4:33 we gather that many were spoken.

All the crowd. As the Lord's words fell upon the ears of the many classes of hearers in the great multitude, an instance was then afforded of the sower sowing the good seed.

Verse 3. — Hearken. Observe the recurrence of this word in verses 15,16,18,20. Everything hinged upon hearing the new teaching (verse 9).

The sower. The parable of the "sower and the soils," and that of the wicked husbandmen (Mark 12:1-12) are the only ones that occur in all three of the synoptic Gospels.

The act of sowing indicated that the Lord was introducing what was new, and what also was capable in itself of bearing fruit, provided the soil was congenial.

Verse 4. — The wayside. Hard beaten paths ran across the fields, on which some of the grain would fall as it was being scattered over the face of the ground. There it could not penetrate the soil, but would lie exposed to the numerous birds which are never very far away from the sower.

Verse 5. — The rocky ground. A thin layer of soil upon the rocks received some seed. The tiny rootlets were thus absolutely prevented from growing downwards, so that all the life of the seed was directed to the growth of the stalk upwards. All appeared to be going well till the fierce heat of an Eastern sun beat upon it. Then it quickly withered, for the roots could reach no stores of moisture from beneath. Contrast the "tree planted by the rivers of water" (Psa. 1:3).

Verse 7. — Among the thorns. Thorns were used to form hedges between fields (Mic. 7:4; Ex. 22:6), from whence they would be likely to spread into the cultivated soil. This does not appear to have been an uncommon occurrence (Jer. 4:3; Job 5:5). From the parable it is clear that the thorns were not grown at the time of the sowing, but the roots were there. The thorns, growing more quickly than the corn, robbed the latter of its nutriment. The corn was therefore practically strangled and became unfruitful.

Verse 8. — Good ground. This was soil that had been well tilled and prepared for the seed.

There is a gradation observable in the fourfold division of this parable. With regard to the seed: —.

1	On the wayside.	Does not grow at all, being stolen.
2	On the rocky soil.	Springs up, but soon withers.
3	On the thorny soil.	Grows up, but bears no fruit.
4	On the good ground.	Springs up, grows up, bears fruit abundantly.

Then with regard to the soils: —

1	The path.	Totally unsuitable.
2	The rocky soil.	Slightly suitable.
3	The thorny soil.	Suitable, but full of thorns.
4	The good ground.	Exactly suitable.

Brought forth. A hundredfold was not unprecedented, for Palestine is extremely fertile. Isaac's crops yielded at this rate (Gen. 26:12).

The order here (thirty, sixty, a hundred) is the reverse of Matthew's (a hundred, sixty, thirty), while Luke only mentions the greatest rate of increase.

There are three classes of fruitless hearers (way, stony, thorny); and three of fruitful ones (thirty, sixty, a hundred).

Verse 9. — Ears to hear. Some had ears to hear, but did not hear (Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 12:2). But any who were really desirous to learn would be taught of God (John 7:17). Compare Ezekiel 3:27.

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Chapters 3:31-35.1

31 AND his brethren and his mother come, and standing outside, sent unto him, calling him. 32And a crowd sat around him; and they say to him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren outside seek (for) thee. 33And he answering them, saith, Who is my mother, or my brethren? 34And he looked round (about) on those sitting about him, and saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren; 35for whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother, and (my) sister and (my) mother.

Notes and Suggestions.

Verses 31-35. — These verses form a kind of appendix to this chapter, which so clearly shows how the nation of Israel was rejecting the Lord and His ministry. After the record of the terrible blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, we have the Lord formally disowning natural relationships. His mother and His brethren after the flesh no longer had any claim upon Him; and in like manner it was useless for any to plead their natural descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Henceforth the divine relationship was to be spiritual, not natural.

Brethren. James, Joses, Judas and Simon (Mark 6:3). In Matthew and Luke the phrase used is, “his mother and his brethren” (Matt. 12:46; Luke 8:19). In this Gospel that order is reversed, viz., “his brethren and his mother.” There is probably some reason for this difference. For similar instances of departure from the usual order, see Genesis 31:14; Numbers 12:1; 32:6.

Verse 35. — Do the will of God. This is the great criterion of relationship to the Lord Jesus. Are you doing God’s will? There must be (1) the sitting down to hear the word (verse 34; compare Deut. 33:3), and (2) the doing of the same. Observe the following facts: —

1. The Lord’s example.

“Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7, g; Psa. 40:8).

“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34).

“I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38).

“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matt. 26:42).

2. True of His followers.

“As the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:6).

“The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:17).

“Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

“Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb. 10:36).

“The God of peace... make you perfect in every good work to do his will” (Heb. 13:20, 21).

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

3. How to know God’s will.

“Teach me to do thy will” (Psa. 143:10).

“If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17).

4. Man’s will.

“He [Pilate] delivered Jesus to their will” (Luke 23:25).

“Ye will not come to me that ye might have life” (John 5:40).

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Chapter 3:19-30.1

19 AND they come to a house [or, home]; 20and again the crowd cometh together, so that they can not even eat bread. 21And his relatives when they heard (of it) went out to lay hold of him; for they said, He is beside himself. 22And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebul, and, By the prince of the demons he casteth out the demons. 23And he called them to [him] and said in parables to them, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26Ancl if Satan rose up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 But no one can enter into the house of the strong one, and plunder his goods, unless he (will) first bind the strong one, and then he will plunder his house.

28Verily I say to you, that all sins shall be forgiven to the sons of men, and their blasphemies how much soever they may blaspheme; 29but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath no forgiveness for eternity, but is guilty of everlasting sin; 30because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Notes and Suggestions.

Verse 19. — Into a house. It is instructive to note that there are many references to the indoor life of the Lord. The testimony of Jehovah's Servant was not by the seaside nor in the streets only, but also at home. In this Gospel alone we find the following passages: —

Text.	House.	Event.
1:29	Peter's	Mother-in-law healed.
2:01	Own	Crowd gathers.
2:15	Levi's	Eats with Publicans.
3:19	Own	Crowd gathers.
5:38	Jairus'	Damsel raised.
7:17	Own	Explains parable.
7:24	Near Tyre and Sidon	Demon cast out in another house, 7:30.
9:28	?	Disciples question Lord.
9:33	Own	Lord questions disciples
10:10	Beyond Jordan	Disciples question Lord.
14:03	Simon the leper's	Jesus anointed.

There appears to have been a particular house in Capernaum specially used by the Lord. It is referred 10 in the above table as His "own," only in this sense.

Some of those who were healed were expressly directed to go to their own houses. See the cases of the

Palsied man (2:11).

Demoniac (5:19).

Blind man (8:26).

Verse 20. — Cannot even eat bread. How diligent was this Servant! If the crowd prevented Him eating for Himself, He was none the less ready to "fill the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:53). He saw in the people who had followed Him an occasion to do His Father's will; and that was His meat (John 4:34).

Verse 21. — His relatives. What a world the Lord came to! He was here as an absolute Stranger. Even "His brethren did not believe in Him" (John 7:5). As it was said in the Psalms, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children" (Psa. 69:8). They could not understand the Lord's zeal. They said, "He is deranged;" His enemies went farther and said, "He is mad" (John 10:20). But both "friends" and enemies were one in opposing Him.

Verse 22. — Scribes from Jerusalem. No doubt the local scribes, having been baffled (2:6-12) sought the assistance of experts from the metropolis that they might prove Him wrong. These were more violent than the first; while the one said that He blasphemed, the others said, "He hath Beelzebub."

Beelzebub. What an awful expression from representatives of a divinely established religion! They did not say, "He hath a demon," or even, "He hath a legion of demons," but, "He hath Beelzebub," the prince of all the demons.

The more correct form of the name is Beelzebul; for it is not quite the same as Baalzebub, the god of Ekron (2 Kings 1).

Prince of the demons. He is also prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2).

Verses 23-27. The Lord shows the utter folly of their hateful charge. How could Satan take up arms against himself? The divided kingdom or divided house cannot stand. Did not their own fall as a kingdom date from its division in the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam? And their restoration cannot be until the "whole house of Israel" is no longer "divided into two kingdoms" (Ezek. 37). The truth was, not that "the strong man's house" was divided, but that it was entered by a stronger than he, who would bind him and spoil his goods (Heb. 2:14,15; 1 John 3:8).

Verse 29.—Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Many fear lest they have committed what they term "the unpardonable sin." Observe that it is not sin against, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost that is spoken of here. In saying, "He hath Beelzebub," they were speaking against the "Spirit of holiness" by Whom He was anointed and sealed (Mark 1:10, 12; Matt. 12:28). "What the Lord denounces is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Keeping that distinctly in view would save many souls a great deal of needless trouble. How many have groaned in terror through fear of being guilty of sin against the Holy Ghost! That phrase admits of vague notions and general reasoning about its nature. But our Lord spoke definitely of blasphemous unforgivable sin against Him... (not that vague sense of evil which troubled souls dread as 'sin against the Holy Ghost,' but blasphemy against Him). What is this evil never to be forgiven? It is attributing God's power that wrought in Jesus to the devil. How many troubled souls would he instantly relieved, if they laid hold of that simple truth! It would dissipate what really is a delusion of the devil, who strives hard to plunge them into anxiety, and drive them into despair, if possible ... What our Lord referred to was neither a sin, nor the sin, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. It was that which the Jewish nation was then rapidly falling into and for which they were neither forgiven then, nor will ever be forgiven. There will be a new stock, so to speak; another generation will be raised up who will receive the Christ Whom their fathers blasphemed; but as far as that generation was concerned they were guilty of this sin, and they could not be forgiven. They began it in the lifetime of Jesus. They consummated it when the Holy Ghost was sent down and despised."

FALSE messengers of peace, who bear the olive branch, yet join the fray.

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Chapters 3:7-19.1

7 AND Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea; and a great multitude from Galilee followed [him]; and from Judea, 8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and (from) beyond the Jordan, and those about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude having heard how great things he was doing, came unto him. 9 And he told his disciples that a boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they should throng him; 10 for he (had) healed many, so that they beset him that they might touch him, as many as had plagues (strokes). 11And the unclean spirits when they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, sang, Thou art the Son of God; 12 and he rebuked them much, that they should not make him manifest. 13 And he goeth up on the mountain, and calleth up (unto him) whom he himself would; and they departed unto him. 14 And he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15 and to have authority [to heal diseases, and] to cast out demons. 16And to Simon he gave Peter as surname; 17 and James, the [son] of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and to them he gave as surnames.

Boanerges, that is, (the) sons of thunder; 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the [son] of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Cananæan, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Notes and Suggestions.

Verse 7. — Withdrew. The Servant of Jehovah turned away from the evil plotters seeking His destruction, and went on with the work which was given Him to do. The Lord never sought persecution.

A great multitude. There are two multitudes spoken of in this and the next verse. (1) The multitude from Galilee which followed Him. (2) The multitude from surrounding and outlying districts which came unto Him.

Verse 9. — A boat to wait on Him. The reason for this circumstance is only mentioned by Mark, — lest He should be thronged by the multitude. His disciples having been fishermen of that locality, it would be an easy matter to obtain a boat to attend the Lord. From the boat He taught the people (Luke 5:3). It is noteworthy that the Lord did not countenance the neglecting of the body, which some have thought to be so acceptable to God. It surely teaches us to take reasonable precautions against accidents, etc. (1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:13). The Lord was here chiefly to bless men spiritually, and the boat was a provision against the overpressure of a crowd wildly intent to obtain relief from physical suffering. Nevertheless He “healed them all” (Matt. 12:15); such was His grace.

Verse 11. — Unclean spirits. The Lord will not suffer them to give their unsolicited testimony to Him as the Son of God. See also Mark 1:25, 34. And yet the heinous charge of collusion with Satan was brought against Him (ch. 3:22).

Verse 12. — Appointed twelve. This was the formal selection of twelve from among the disciples to be apostles. The number is an allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). The special characteristics of an apostle in the time of the Lord are here detailed: —

To be with the Lord;

To go forth to preach;

To heal the sick;

To cast out demons.

Verse 14. — Preach. There is a succession of preaching in this Gospel, repentance being prominent.

John the Baptist preached repentance and the coming of Christ (chs. 1:4, 7).

Jesus preached, “Repent ye and believe the gospel” (chs. 1:14, 15).

The twelve apostles preached that men should repent (ch. 6:12).

Verse 15. — Power. The power was given them when they went forth to preach (ch. 6:7). The Lord not only had the title to heal the sick and to cast out demons, but could confer it on others.

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Chapter 3:1-6.1

1AND he entered again into the synagogue, and there was there a man having his hand dried up. 2And they were watching him whether he would heal him on the sabbath (day), that they might accuse him. 3And he saith to the man that had his hand dried, Rise up into the midst. 4And he saith to them, Is it lawful on the Sabbath (days) to do good or to do ill, to save life, or to kill? 5 And when he (had) looked round (about) on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart (s), he saith to the man, Stretch out thy hand. And he stretched [it] out, and his hand was restored (whole as the other). 6And the Pharisees, having gone out, immediately were deliberating with the Herodians against him how they might destroy him.

Notes and Suggestions.

Verse 1.— Again. There appear to have been seven miraculous cures wrought by the Lord on the Sabbath: —

Mark 1:21-27. Casting out a demon.

Mark 1:29-31. Healing Peter’s mother-in-law.

Mark 3:1-6. Restoring the withered hand.

Luke 13:11-17. Restoring infirm woman.

Luke 14:1-4. Healing man with dropsy.

John 5:1-16. Healing impotent man.

John 9:1-41. Opening blind man’s eyes.

There were others performed (Mark 1:34), but details of these only are recorded in the four Gospels.

Synagogue. Of the above cures, the demon was cast out (Mark 1:21-27), the withered hand restored, and the infirm woman healed (Luke 13:11-17). publicly in the synagogue.

Dried up. The hand was shrunk and wasted, so that it was quite useless. By natural means this was incurable.

Verse 2. — Were watching. They were eyeing Him with evil intent; as in Luke 14 1; 20:20. See also Acts 9:24.

On the Sabbath. Immediately before this, Mark gives a work of necessity on the Sabbath (2:23-28), here a work of mercy. Luke says it occurred upon “another” Sabbath, perhaps the week following the incident in the cornfields.

The Lord’s action on the Sabbath, which was the particular sign of Judaism, is highly significant that it was to be set aside. “One cannot but see how the old system, based on what man ought to be for God, is being set aside for what God is for man. But the former [the law] having been established by God, nothing but the words and works of Jesus would have justified the Jews in giving it up.” But they resisted both His words and His works (John 15:22, 24).

Verse 3. — Rise up into the midst. The miracle was to be performed publicly in the sight of all.

Verse 4. — Is it lawful? They had asked Him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? “that they might accuse Him. He turns their question upon themselves, bringing the light to bear upon their crooked words, — Is it lawful to do good or ill, to save or to destroy life? This question would admit of but one honest reply; and that reply would quash every objection they might raise against the Lord’s healing the afflicted man.

Verse 5. — Anger, being grieved. Righteous and holy indignation at their willful resistance and wicked opposition to the truth. “The presence of grief and anger in the same heart at the same time is no contradiction. Indeed, with Him Who was at once perfect love and perfect holiness, grief for the sinner must ever go hand in hand with anger against the sin; and this anger—which with us is in danger of becoming a turbid thing, of passing into anger against the man who is God’s creature, instead of being anger against the sin, which is the devil’s corruption of God’s creature—with Him was perfectly pure; for it is not the agitation of the waters, but the sediment at the bottom, which troubles and defiles them; and where no sediment is, no impurity will follow on their agitation.” “Though we read of His looking round in anger, yet we soon learn, that this was not the anger of one who has taken the seat of judgment, but of Him Who was grieved at heart for the hardness and unbelief of men. It was the sensitiveness of the spirit of holiness.”

Whole as the other. This phrase is found in Matthew 12:13, but is an unwarranted addition here, and so omitted in the revised translation above.

Verse 6. — Herodians. The Herodians appear to have been a political rather than a religious party among the Jews. They are also referred to in Matthew 22:16 and Mark 12:13, and in each case they are conferred with by the Pharisees with a view to the apprehension of the Lord.

Destroy Him. Those who complained of the Lord restoring the man’s withered hand on the Sabbath had no compunction in plotting against the Lord’s life on that day. Compare the Lord’s words above, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to kill?” Though boasting of the law, they broke its spirit and dishonored God (Rom. 2:23). They could not save life, but they meant to destroy life as soon as they had opportunity.

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Chapters 2:23-28.1

23 AND it came to pass that he was passing on the Sabbath (day) through the cornfields; and his disciples began, as they walked on, plucking the ears (of corn). 24And the Pharisees said to him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath (day) that which is not lawful? 25 And he said to them, Have ye never read what David did when he had need and was hungry, he and those with him? 26 How he entered into the house of God, at [the place of] Abiathar [? the] high priest, and ate the Show-bread which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him? 27 And he said to them, The Sabbath was made on account of man, and not man on account of the Sabbath: 28 so that the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath also.

Notes and Suggestions.

Verse 23. — Sabbath. This is called in Luke 6:1 The “second-first” Sabbath, and it was the first occurring after the offering of the wave-sheaf (Lev. 23:10). The Sabbath immediately after Passover was a “high day” (John 19:31), and was the first of the series of seven Sabbaths to be reckoned before the “offering of the wave-loaves (Lev. 23:15-17). The one in the text was the second of that series. The order therefore would be as follows: —

NISAN	14	Passover.
	15	Sabbath (the “high day”). Feast of unleavened bread begins.
	16	Offering of wave-sheaf.
	21	Last day of feast of unleavened bread.
	22	Second Sabbath (“second-first”).
SIVAN	5	Seventh Sabbath.
	6	Offering of wave-loaves. Day of Pentecost.

Many explanations have been given of the peculiar term (second-first); but the above seems to accord best with its known usage by Greek writers. The word is omitted in the Revised Version, but, it is believed, there is not sufficient reason for the omission, which was probably due to its difficulty.

Plucking the ears. They were permitted to pluck their neighbor’s corn with their hands, but not to use a sickle (Deut. 23:25). The act of the disciples was not objected to on the ground that they helped themselves to the property of others.

Verse 24. — Not lawful. In Luke 6:1 we read the disciples rubbed the grains of corn out of the husks in their hands. This operation the Pharisees in their eagerness to condemn the Lord denominated “work.” And as the law expressly said no work must be done on the Sabbath day (Ex. 20:10), they congratulated themselves on the smartness of their supposed capture.

Verse 25. — What David did. There was a striking similarity between the circumstances of David and those of the Lord. David was the anointed king of Israel but was obliged to fly from the wrath of Saul. And when hungry and in desperate need he applied to the high priest who gave him the shewbread. The Lord was among the Jews as the anointed of Jehovah (Mark 1:10), but disowned by them and outcast. They would exonerate David because he had need and was hungry; but were the Lord’s disciples, in a similar case, to starve because it was the Sabbath? Whose fault was it that the Lord’s disciples were obliged to seek food in the cornfields?

Verse 26. — Abiathar the high priest. There is a difficulty here, since in 1 Sam. 21. we read that Ahimelech (also called Ahiah, 1 Sam. 14:3) gave David the shewbread. Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech, escaped at the massacre of his relatives, and became a companion of David in his wanderings. The difficulty remains because there is nothing in the sacred history to explain why the Lord mentions Abiathar and not Ahimelech or Ahiah. Reading as the A.V. here, “the days of Abiathar,” it means in the time of Abiathar who afterward became high-priest. Or, possibly Abiathar acted for his father, as Hophni and Phinehas did for Eli. Even if quite inexplicable to us, we might be certain (1) that if we knew all the circumstances, the explanation would be simple, and (2) that the Lord made no mistake. But the explanation indicated in the above translation seems highly probable. There the phrase is taken to be a reference to that section of the inspired history relating to Abiathar. A similar instance may be seen in Romans 11:2; “Wot ye not what the scripture saith in [in the section, or history of] Elijah?” And, again, the Lord, when speaking to the Sadducees, says, “Have ye not read in the book of Moses in [the place concerning] the bush?” (Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37). This mode of reference to the Old Testament scriptures is known to have been practiced by Jewish teachers; thus, they called 2 Samuel 1 “the Bow,” and Ezekiel 1 “the Chariot.”

Show-bread. Twelve unleavened loaves were placed on the table in the holy place each Sabbath, 24:5-9) representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The loaves when removed, were eaten by the priests (Aaron and his sons). Hence the bread is called “hallowed” (1 Sam. 21:4).

Verse 27. — Sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath was made for man’s benefit, and not, as the Pharisees would have it, that man was made for the rigid observance of a pitiless law.

Verse 28. — Lord of the Sabbath. In the title, “Son of man,” the Lord takes a place outside the narrow range of Judaism, of which system, the Sabbath was a distinctive mark. He was not in bondage to the legal claims of the Sabbath; and as He had power on earth to forgive sins, so He was Lord of the Sabbath also. If He is rejected (and Son of Man is His title as such) He has power even over the Sabbath.

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Chapter 2:13-22.1

13 And he went out again by the sea (side); and all the crowd came unto him, and he taught them.14 And passing by he saw Levi the (son) of Alphaeus sitting at the toll-office, and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he rose and followed him. 15 And it came to pass as he reclined in his house, that [and] many tax-gatherers and sinners reclined (also) with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many, and they followed him. 16 And the scribes and Pharisees, seeing him eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners, said to his disciples, What! doth he eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners?

17And Jesus, when he heard, saith to them, They that are strong have no need of the physician, but they that are ill. I came not to call (the) righteous but sinners (to repentance).

18And the disciples of John and (of) the Pharisees were fasting; and they come and say to him, Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19And Jesus said to them, Can the sons of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20But (the) days will come when the bridegroom shall have been taken from them, and then shall they fast in that day. 21 (And) No one seweth a patch of unmilled [cloth] on an old garment; else its new filling up taketh (away) from the old, and a worse rent is made. 22 And no one putteth new wine into old skins: else the (new) wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins (will be marred). But new wine must be put into new skins.

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