

THE GREATEST

SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER

So far in our study, we've been seeing the uniqueness, power, and authority of Jesus as the "Son of God" (1:1). Jesus is the greatest in heaven and on Earth—overcoming Satan, demons, and sickness.

Chapter 2 opens with a dramatic story of friends removing a roof to lower a paralytic friend to Jesus. The crowds were so thick they couldn't get close to the house Jesus occupied. In chapter 1, the Sky-Ripper tore open the heavens to affirm Jesus' identity and mission—these men tore a roof off because they believed it!

Although Mark has already shared about many healings, both physical and spiritual, this encounter introduces a new factor. Here, Mark introduces the primary antagonists to Jesus' story, the Pharisees. Along with the Sadducees and the Herodians (which we'll see in our passage today), the Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders that repeatedly went toe to toe with Jesus... and lost.

These men were highly educated and had memorized the entire Old Testament. Part of the irony in Jesus' story is that the religious leaders should have been the first to recognize him as the Son of God, and yet, their hearts were hardened. Jesus threatened their power and status and, as we will see, they hated him for it.

MARK 2:23-24, 27-3:6

²³ One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. ²⁴ And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

²⁷ And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

¹ Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. ² And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. ³ And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." ⁴ And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. ⁶ The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"There's power in the presence, power in the blood, power in the name of Jesus." I hope this study buries these lyrics deep in your heart. Scan the QR-code to worship and see an adaptation from Mark 2 when friends tear off a roof to get the paralytic to Jesus.

The show, *The Chosen*, like a great commentary, helps us imagine what it would have been like to meet Jesus. We must test it with Scripture. But, these scenes are a powerful reminder of the reality behind the stories we read.



DISCUSSION

How would you respond to someone who says that following Jesus is just following a set of rules?

1. What act(s) caused the scribes to criticize Jesus' disciples? (2:23, 3:2)

2. How did Jesus respond to his critics? (2:27-28; 3:4)

3. How did Jesus' critics respond to him? (6)

4. How did Jesus' teaching about the Sabbath differ from the Pharisees and how did that relate to God's heart in giving the command?

5. In what ways have you made your faith about "following rules" instead of a relationship with Jesus?

6. How do you/should you pursue Jesus relationally?

The religious leaders often failed to recognize Jesus because they expected the Messiah to be like them. Jesus doesn't fit into our boxes. If you have questions, talk to your Coach today!

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

THE GREATEST

STUDY NOTES

IT'S ABOUT LOVE

In 2017, Sam Houston State was swept out of the NCAA Super Regionals by Florida State, one step away from the College World Series. Coach Matt Deggs gave a powerful speech in the post-game press conference that the game is about much more than a win. Scan the QR-code for the 2-minute video.



"It's not about wins or losses, it's about love. It's about building men, building relationships that will last forever." It's easy to trust and obey a coach that loves you like that. However, many of us find it harder to trust and obey the Lord. The Lord's character is unquestionably pure and holy. His competence is unmatched. So, why do we have such a hard time?

Many of us treat the do's and don'ts of the Bible as if God's sitting up in Heaven trying to ruin our fun. God isn't a cosmic-kill joy. Repeatedly in God's Law we see the phrase, *"that it may go well with you."* God wants the best for his people. Namely, God wants people to pursue a relationship with him above all else. It's not about the rules, it's about a relationship with the Rule-giver. *He* is the best thing for us, so *he wants us to want him!*

When it comes to rules, people typically err in one of two ways. What most of us have probably struggled with is the desire to live as if no rules exist and we can do whatever we want. The other side of the coin are the people that think they can earn favor by following the rules perfectly. The first path is lawlessness, the second is legalism.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN RELIGION

As we said in the introduction, Mark 2 introduces the Pharisees. They were masters of legalism. They knew their religion and could practice it flawlessly. The problem was that they focused on earning God's favor by keeping his rules. We see this earlier in Mark 2 when Jesus called Levi, a tax collector, as one of his disciples. *The scribes of the Pharisees caught Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors (2:16).* Jesus responded to their criticism by saying, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners"* (2:17). The Pharisees knew all about God's rules, but they never understood God's heart.

One of the most significant rules the Pharisees kept was Sabbath. Sabbath meant to rest on the seventh day. God commanded Sabbath in the

Ten Commandments and even modeled it in the act of Creation in Genesis 1. No work was to be done. It was a holy day meant for rest. However, the Pharisees then took that one "rule" and added a whole bunch of others like: "You can walk *this far*, but not *that far*," "You can pick *this up*, but not *that*," etc. Their rules got very specific. They were so worried about breaking the one "rule," they missed the reason it was given.

So, **one Sabbath**, as Jesus and his disciples were **going through the grainfields**, the **disciples began to pluck heads of grain** while walking. **The Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"** Jesus replied, **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."**

Sabbath had many purposes including keeping God's people unique from those around them. It pointed people back to the Law given through Moses. And, it pointed God's people forward to their ultimate rest in God's Messiah. Ultimately, God commanded Sabbath as a gift for his people *to enjoy with him*—not as a burden to endure.

Their rules completely missed the heart of God. This was made even clearer as Jesus **entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand... They watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him... he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.**

RELIGION KILLS, BUT JESUS SAVES

Seeing this healing, the religious leaders repented and trusted in Jesus as the Messiah. Wait, no, that's what they *should* have done! Instead, so blinded by Jesus breaking their rules, **the Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.**

Following Jesus isn't a religion about rules. It's a relationship. It's about a love that will last forever. Nobody can do enough good things to overcome their sin. An imperfect person can never make themselves perfect. This is what the Pharisee's constantly missed. Jesus didn't keep their rules. He didn't look like them or act like them. That's why they hated him. Instead, he lived the heart of the Father and brought salvation to the world.