

# Sabbath Healings and Hard Hearts



## SABBATH—APRIL 9

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Mark 2:23–3:35.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Then Jesus said to them [the Pharisees],<sup>1</sup> ‘The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath day. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27, 28, NIV).

**TROUBLE WAS COMING.** Problems soon started to appear around Jesus. What Jesus said and what He did would create trouble among people. Yet it was not all trouble. Along with the Sabbath healing, we follow Jesus as He chooses and authorizes (gives power to) 12 disciples to work with Him. Later, this ragtag group would change the world forever. We also see Jesus dealing with His own human family. His family misunderstood Him and His work.

But most of all, this week we take another look at the life and ministry (work) of our Savior. His every word and every act should help us love Him even more. But the Pharisees blamed Him for being on Satan's side and for breaking the Sabbath.

**A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Why did Jesus heal people on the Sabbath? Why did the Pharisees really hate Jesus? What were the Pharisees trying to protect? What is the unpardonable sin?<sup>2</sup> Why did Jesus talk about the unpardonable sin when He did?

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 16.

<sup>1</sup>Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus' day who believed a person must keep God's law to be saved.

<sup>2</sup>unpardonable sin—the sin that can never be forgiven (Mark 3:29).

SUNDAY—APRIL 10

MADE FOR MAN (Mark 2:23-28).

**Read Mark 2:23-28. What was the principle<sup>3</sup> behind David's action? What did Jesus really mean when He said the Sabbath was made for man?**



In Jesus' day, two things separated the Hebrew nation from other people. (1) The Hebrews worshiped one God instead of many gods. (2) They refused to work on the seventh day. Hundreds of years ago when they were a free nation, they failed on both of these matters. They worshiped idols and broke the Sabbath. Many prophets warned them they were taking the wrong path. But they continued their downward slide. Later, other nations

carried them away as slaves. Assyria wiped out the ten northern tribes. Babylon captured the southern kingdom of Judah 140 years later.

When the people of Judah returned from Babylon, they tried to avoid the mistakes that had caused them to lose their nation. Trying to safeguard the Sabbath, religious leaders made many rules about how to keep the Sabbath.

The Mishnah, the Jewish law, lists 39 kinds of work not allowed on the Sabbath. But these general rules were further explained with great detail. There were also many other rules for Sabbath keeping. One of the most commonly known rules is the "Sabbath day's journey." People could only walk about two-thirds of a mile on the Sabbath. Other rules were not looking in a mirror, or not lighting a candle on the Sabbath. People could not spit on the ground on Sabbath, because that would be like watering the grass. People could not carry a handkerchief on the Sabbath, if one end of it was not sewn to their clothes. Because it was sewn to their clothes, it was part of their clothes, so they were not really carrying it. (These examples are taken from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 587.)

The Jewish leaders worried too much about all these rules. But Jesus cut through their rules. He tried to restore<sup>4</sup> the Sabbath to its real purpose. The Sabbath was not meant to

<sup>3</sup>principle—a law upon which other laws are based. For example, the Ten Commandments are based on two principles: (1) love for God and (2) love for other people.

<sup>4</sup>restore—to make something as it was in the beginning before sin appeared.

be a burden. The Sabbath was meant to be a delight. The Sabbath was a day of worship, relaxation, and restoration.<sup>5</sup> It was to be a day of joy. It was to be a day to help make others happy. The Sabbath is God's gift to people. The rabbis<sup>6</sup> had turned the Sabbath into a burden.

**Isaiah 58:13 encourages us to call the Sabbath a "delight." Exodus 20:8 tells us to keep the Sabbath holy. What is your idea of delight? What does it mean to be holy? How can being holy and being a delight be the same? How can the Sabbath be both holy and a delight?**

### MONDAY—APRIL 11

#### THE MAN WITH THE WITHERED (USELESS) HAND (Mark 3:1-6).

**Read Mark 3:1-6. Why do you think the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus? Also read John 11:48 and Acts 17:6.**



The Sabbath was a day for worship and thinking about heavenly things. But Jesus' enemies did not open their hearts to the blessings they could receive on the Sabbath through Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship. Instead, they looked for ways to get Jesus into trouble. They wanted to prove Jesus broke the Sabbath. But they themselves were breaking the Sabbath in their hearts.

Mark says Jesus was sad because of the hardness of His enemies' hearts. But that hardness did not happen because of how they believed the Sabbath should be kept. Their hardness was a result of their attitude<sup>7</sup> toward Jesus. Jesus threatened their power. He threatened their religious and political influence over the people. That is why they hated Him so much. Of course, they could not just say that. So they needed to find a way to blame Jesus for doing something wrong. Such blame would weaken Jesus' power. Their fear of losing influence blinded them to the great power Jesus showed in healing the man's hand. Instead, they accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath.

**Read Mark 3:4. Why did they not answer Jesus' question? What does their silence show about their real motives?<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>5</sup>restoration—returning to God; to help us have God's character; to rest on the Sabbath so we can be ready for the new week.

<sup>6</sup>rabbis—Jewish religious teachers.

<sup>7</sup>attitude—how you feel and think about something; the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of a person or group of people.

<sup>8</sup>motives—reasons for doing what we do.

The same as the Pharisees, we are good at pretending to be holy. When we pretend to be holy, we hide our real motives from ourselves and from other people. How can we be sure that our reasons for doing things are pure?

**TUESDAY—APRIL 12**  
**THE TWELVE APOSTLES**  
**(Mark 3:7-19).**

Today's lesson shows how an important part of Jesus' ministry (work) grew. As Jesus became more famous around Galilee, His group of followers continued to grow. It was now time for Him to choose some of these followers for a special work.

**What does Mark 3:7-14 say about how popular Jesus was? How might your answer explain why He decided to ordain<sup>9</sup> people at that time to work with Him?**

When He was most popular, Jesus withdrew to a mountainside. Luke gives an important detail—Jesus spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12). Jesus faced an important decision. So He asked His Father for guidance.

**Why did Jesus choose 12 of His followers to work closely with Him? Mark 3:13-19. What larger**

**purpose was Jesus planning for? Mark 16:15; Matthew 10:5-15.**



The word *apostle* means one who is sent. The chosen Twelve would go out to preach and to drive out demons. That way, more of Jesus' work could be done while Jesus was still on earth. After Jesus returned to heaven, these apostles would carry on His work. But before going out, they were to spend time with Jesus. They were to study His methods and grow to be similar<sup>10</sup> to Him in character.

These 12 people came from many backgrounds. They all had different characters, strengths, and weaknesses. Several were fishermen. One was a tax collector. Another was a member of the Zealots.<sup>11</sup> Simon Peter was bold and impatient. He had much to learn. James and John had hot tempers. Then there was Judas Iscariot. He would betray Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>ordain—to give people the right to do a special work for God.

<sup>10</sup>similar—almost the same as.

<sup>11</sup>Zealots—a strong group of patriots who believed in using weapons to make Israel a powerful nation.

There were so many people in Israel who were educated and rich. They probably would have been a much better group to spread Jesus' message. So why did Jesus not choose them? What lessons are here for us about (1) judging the character of other people, (2) judging another person's spiritual growth, and (3) deciding what characteristics<sup>12</sup> are important for ministers to have?

### WEDNESDAY—APRIL 13

#### JESUS AND BEELZEBUB (SATAN) (Mark 3:22-30).

Jesus' miracles were too many and too wonderful to deny. God's power was at work in Him. But spies tried to find a reason to blame Him for doing something bad. The spies refused to admit He was God's Son. They tried to argue that Jesus was on Satan's side.

How did Jesus answer the people who blamed Him for being on the devil's side? Mark 3:22-30. Why did Jesus give them such a strong warning in Mark 3:28-30? What does verse 29 say is the unpardonable sin?

Jesus' work tore down Satan's kingdom. He cast (threw) out demons and healed sick people. He set peo-

ple free from the chains of their sins and bad habits. This is just the opposite of how Satan works.

"Jesus spoke this warning to the Pharisees who did not believe the charge they brought against Him. All of them had felt drawn toward the Savior. They had heard the Holy Spirit's voice in their own hearts announcing Him to be the Anointed (Chosen) of Israel. The Holy Spirit had encouraged them to confess<sup>13</sup> themselves to His disciples. In front of Jesus, the Pharisees had realized their unholiness. They had wished for a righteousness (holiness) they could not create. But after they rejected Jesus, it would be too embarrassing for them to receive Him as the Savior. So they decided to set their feet in the path of unbelief. They were too proud to admit their error." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 322.

**How does today's lesson help us understand the unpardonable sin? What would you say to people who thought they had done the unpardonable sin? If they are attracted to Jesus, how does this prove that they have not done the unpardonable sin?**

### THURSDAY—APRIL 14

#### JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS (Mark 3:31-34).

During His earthly ministry (work),

<sup>12</sup>characteristics—what a person's character is made of, such as patience, kindness, or anger.

<sup>13</sup>confess—to say you have sinned.

Jesus' family did not support Him. "Even Jesus' own brothers did not believe in him" (John 7:5, NIV). His mother, Mary, had kept in her heart the events<sup>14</sup> connected with His birth and childhood (Luke 2:19, 51). But she did not understand Jesus' work as the Savior.

**Crowds surrounded Jesus so He did not have time to eat. What did His family decide to do? Mark 3:20, 21.**

His family was embarrassed by the kind of people Jesus was with. Maybe His critics saying He was on the devil's side bothered them. What probably bothered them the most was that the religious leaders rejected Him, when the people thought the religious leaders should have accepted Him as their "Savior" from the hated Romans.

**How did Jesus answer His family? Did He not care about them? What point was He making by saying: " 'Anyone who does what God wants is my brother and sister and mother' " ? (Mark 3:31-34). Read also Deuteronomy 30:20; Matthew 7:21; John 15:14; 1 John 5:3.**

Mark lists Jesus' brothers as James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon.

He tells us that Jesus also had sisters (Mark 6:3). It is interesting that Mark does not list Joseph, Mary's husband. Jesus' brothers speak of Jesus as their younger Brother. They tell Him what to do. They want to take charge of Him. Jesus having older brothers and sisters tells us that Joseph had been married before. So he was a widower when he married Mary. During Jesus' ministry (work), Joseph is never named. It might be that he had died by this time.

After Jesus' resurrection,<sup>15</sup> His family members saw Him in a different light. His brothers are listed as being among the believers at Pentecost<sup>16</sup> (Acts 1:14). Paul also calls James, Jesus' brother, an "apostle" (Galatians 1:19).

**Do you know Adventists who are struggling with family members who do not understand or appreciate their Adventist faith? What kind of help can you give them? How could today's lesson encourage them?**

#### FRIDAY—APRIL 15

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Study the seven Sabbath miracles of Jesus. Why did He do each one? What lessons did each one teach? How did His enemies feel about the miracles? Mark 1:21-28; Mark 1:29-31; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-4; John 5:1-15; John 9:1-41. Read Ellen G. White, "The

<sup>14</sup>events—things that happen.

<sup>15</sup>resurrection—coming back to life after dying.

<sup>16</sup>Pentecost—when the disciples received the Holy Spirit after Jesus went back to heaven (Acts 2:1-4).

Sabbath,” “He Ordained Twelve,” and “Who Are My Brethren [Brothers/Sisters]?” in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 281–289, 290–297, and 321–327.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. If a new Adventist asked you, What principles can you show me about how to keep the Sabbath? What would you say? Why?
2. What differences will there be in our Sabbath keeping if (1) we keep the Sabbath simply because God commands it, or (2) if we keep the Sabbath because we love Jesus and want to follow Him?
3. Why is it so hard to work with someone who feels about Jesus the way the Pharisees felt about Jesus? How would you try to help that person? Is it ever too late for someone who has done the unpardonable sin to accept Jesus? Explain your answer.

**SUMMARY:** Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. He showed His authority (power) as Lord by what He did on the Sabbath. But the religious leaders were threatened by what Jesus did. So they hardened their hearts against Him. We say we believe in Jesus. But does He threaten us? Let us always keep our hearts open to Him, so we do not harden our hearts against Him.



**Do not harden your heart  
against the Holy Spirit.**