



2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 2 A Day in the Ministry of Jesus

by Tim Jennings

MONDAY

I want to follow up on a topic that was in last week's lesson, but is also in this week's lesson and we find it in Monday's lesson, in the fifth paragraph,

- Next, the command to come out of the man is understandable, but why the command, “ ‘Be quiet’ ” (NKJV)? Beginning here in Mark, a remarkable motif appears: Jesus' call for silence regarding who He is. Scholars call this the “Messianic Secret.” (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 16).

This idea of secrets, of Jesus promoting secrecy, let's unpack this a little more.

The lesson asks us to read Mark 1:23-26:

- Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”
“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. (Mark 1:23-26 NIV84).

Why did Jesus tell the demon to be quiet? Was Jesus wanting secrecy? Was Jesus starting a secret society, a mystery religion? No! Jesus is the light, and Jesus never promoted a Messianic Secret, it is exactly the opposite. Was telling a demon to be quiet same as saying I want my mission to be a secret? So why did Jesus tell the demon to be quiet—and I want you to see this. It is important, because Jesus told the demon to be quiet because Jesus wanted to truth to be seen, understood, revealed, and promoted, the opposite of a secret.

Was the demon telling the truth?

No, the demon lied, but the lie was mixed with a truth which made it all the more dangerous and effective at obscuring the truth. What is the lie the demon mixed with the truth that the demon was attempting to promote—the lie that if believed would undermine the plan of salvation **while** people claim Jesus as their Messiah?

Let me say that again—the plan of the demon was to infect the thinking of people in such a way that they could acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, the Son of the Most High God, and still be lost and still promote Satan's lies about God and Satan's kingdom under the name of Jesus—and the words of the demon included the lie that would cause this to happen if believed. And sadly, this demon's lie has

been believed and taught as truth for millennia in Christianity and is still being taught. And sadly, our quarterly writers/editors believe this lie that that is why they conclude this is a Messianic Secret motif, rather than seeing that Jesus' instructions are just the opposite, it is the Messianic Revelation of truth motif.

What is the lie? **That Jesus is the source of inflicted punishment, destruction for sin, the type of punishment that comes from imposed law.**

Those who wrote our lesson believes this to be true, that Jesus will use power to inflict external punishment and death for sin, thus they see no problem, no error, no falsehood in the words of the demon and therefore conclude Jesus must want secrecy.

We see the same lie promoted by other demons—Satan's forces have a gameplan, they have an agenda, they have a false view of God that they actively work to promote and get people to accept, and we read it again in Matthew 8:28-29:

- When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Matthew 8:28-29 NIV84)

What is the lie the demons are telling?

That God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, torment, and death, which is quickly and easily accepted as truth by people who believe God's law functions like human law.

The people hear the demon acknowledge Jesus as the Son of the Most High, and then hear the fear, and the question "Have you come to destroy us? Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?" and people accept, embrace, and promote the lie that God is the source of torture and death inflicted upon demons and unrepentant sinners.

No wonder Jesus told the demon to keep quiet. Sadly, so much of Christianity, including leaders in the SDA church, are still teaching these lies from demons about God.

The message for this time, the message that is to lighten the world for Christ's return is that God is not like Satan has made Him out to be. God is the Creator and God's laws are the laws life itself is built upon, deviating from God's design, breaking God's laws, harm the one who breaks them and results in pain, suffering, and death unless healed by the Creator. God uses power to heal, to save, to redeem, to hold at bay the destroyer. God does not use power to torture and/or kill—second death as punishment for sin. But if we believe the demons lies, that God's law functions like human law, then we naturally believe the words of the demons that Jesus is one day going to torture and kill—and Satan is counting on that for he will do exactly that when he impersonates Christ.

Was Jesus promoting secrecy? No, He was advancing the truth, but Jesus often told the people He healed to keep quiet, and the disciples not to share their belief He was the Son of God. If He wasn't using the Messianic Secret motif—why did He do this? Because He was the light to lighten all men only by the means, methods, principles of God.

- Methods—God's methods are to win based on the truth, on reality, which is through the revelation of evidence, truth in action, versus those who have no truth and thus must rely only on proclamations, declarations, claims, and testimony of others. Jesus wants people to see for themselves. When John the Baptist's disciples came and asked if He was the One, He told them to spend the day and watch. See the evidence, don't just accept a verbal declaration, don't accept the conclusions of others, understand and know the truth for yourselves. So, Jesus is telling people to be silent so He can reveal the evidence in action and people will learn how to think through things for themselves and not rely on other people's testimony alone for their faith. They are to hear the testimony, like people from Samaria who heard the testimony of the woman at the well and then came to learn from Jesus directly and no longer believed based on the woman's testimony, but because they knew the truth for themselves.

After I prepared this week's lesson, I came across this quotation from the book *Education* as I was reading during my morning devotions. Please consider this in light of what we have just discussed:

- It is a fact widely ignored, though never without danger, that error rarely appears for what it really is. **It is by mingling with or attaching itself to truth that it gains acceptance...** The **mind that depends upon the judgment of others is certain, sooner or later, to be misled.** (Education 230).

And sadly most of church history the organized churches have taught people to surrender their judgment to the church leadership, to trust the priests, popes, church counsels, pastor, the Biblical Research Institute, the General Conference Committee, rather than thinking for themselves as Paul taught in Romans 14—every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind.

Other reasons Jesus told people to be quiet included:

- Impact on mission—Jesus didn't want to alert his human enemies to the fact that the one they opposed was in the area, thus drawing more opposition
- Prejudice and bias from the religious authorities against the people who were receptive to the gospel, thus decreasing the arbitrary rule application that would create social outcasts, and prevent people from being restored to community

In Monday's lesson the study guide quotes Mark 1:22, let's read that verse:

- The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. (Mark 1:22 NIV84).

What does this mean?

What authority did Jesus wield?

Did Jesus teach with the authority of:

- The Sanhedrin—today known as the General Conference Committee? In other words, did Jesus teach with the support and endorsement of the organized church leadership?
 - Then how could His teachings be with authority if the authorized church on earth did not recognize, endorse, and support Him? In fact, how could He teach with authority if they were actively telling people He was teaching heresy?
 - Did this dynamic, church leaders opposing truth, happen only to Jesus or throughout all history? Did the priests of Israel often oppose the prophets? Read Jeremiah?
 - Did church leadership oppose the Reformers?
 - Could this happen today? Could church leaders today still oppose those who are teaching with the authority of heaven?
- The state—did Jesus have the endorsement of governmental office?
 - Pilate could speak with the authority of Rome.
 - Matthew could speak with the authority of Rome on matters of taxation. Did Jesus speak with the authority of the government?
- Academic credentials—did Jesus speak with the authority of academic endorsement, a degree from a recognized university? Board certification from a recognized credentialing body?
 - In fact, didn't they wonder how He could teach with such wisdom having never gone to their universities and never completed an academic degree?
- If Jesus didn't have the authority of the church, of the state, of academia, of some professional society, then upon what did His authority in teaching rest? What about the authority of truth? Jesus taught reality, the truth of God and His kingdom of love.
- But why does the Bible say He taught with authority but adds, "NOT as the teachers of the law"? What does this contrast mean?
- Were the teachers of the law teaching the wrong Sabbath, the wrong festivals, the wrong tithe percentage, the wrong list of clean and unclean meats?
- What were the teachers of the law doing that undermined the authority of their teaching?
- Didn't the teachers of the law have the endorsement of the General Conference Committee—the Sanhedrin, and didn't they have the authority of office, and the academic credentials to teach—to be subject matter experts? And didn't they claim the authority of Scripture and of Moses and God Himself? But their teachings didn't have the authority of Jesus, why? What was wrong with their teaching? They were not speaking with godly authority but with earthly authority—what is the difference?
 - God's authority rests in truth and love in harmony with His character, design laws, and methods—in other words reality.
 - Earthly authority rests in coercion, compelling power, rules, declared positions of power, the office itself, the laws enacted, the degrees attained, regardless of whether it is true.

- We see this in the world today like never before—people declaring things to be one way when in reality they are the exact opposite.
- Consider Saul of Tarsus before the Damascus road when he was arresting Christians and persecuting the followers of Christ. Did he have the authority of the Sanhedrin, of his appointed office, of the law, and the local government? But did he speak with the authority of God? Why or why not?
- What was Jesus' authority—was it coming from position, endorsement, office, academic degree, or was it innate in some way and can we wield that same authority?

Isn't it the truth itself that gave His words authority? To the degree anyone is speaking truth they are speaking with authority for the truth is authoritative.

Consider these historical quotes:

- Jesus' manner of teaching was beautiful and attractive, and it was ever characterized by simplicity. He **unfolded the mysteries** of the kingdom of heaven through the use of figures and **symbols with which his hearers were familiar**, and the common people heard him gladly; for **they could comprehend his words**. There were no high-sounding words used, to understand which it was necessary to consult a dictionary. He illustrated the glories of the kingdom of God by the use of **the experiences** and occurrences of earth. (Christian Education 126, emphasis mine). [Christ came to reveal mysteries, to unveil secrets, as the light of the world. He used illustrations that made it easy for people to understand reality. He did not use metaphor or symbol to hide reality, but to reveal it. He chose simple words, not complex theological jargon that people don't understand, like propitiation, expiation, vicarious substitution, and so on. And He connected the truth to real world experiences because God is the God of reality. He showed and taught that God's truth always translates into real world living, not theoretical constructs for some future life. The integrative evidence-based approach—He explained Scripture connected to science and nature and life experiences.]
- Christ came to **unveil divine truth** to the world. He taught as one having **authority**. He spake as never man spake. There was no hesitancy in His manner, not the shadow of a doubt in His utterances. He spake as one who **understood** every part of His subject. [He had confidence in His demeanor because He was speaking reality-based truths that He understood. We cannot teach what we do not understand, and sadly many Bible teachers do not understand God's design laws and thus they teach a distorted legal religion, the confused system of conflicting beliefs the Bible symbolically describes as the fallen system of Babylon. Jesus confronted this legal distortion with the religious leaders of His day and we are still battling this legal mindset in the church today.] He could have opened mysteries which patriarchs and prophets desired to look into, which human curiosity had been impatiently desirous of understanding. But when men **could not discern the most simple, plainly stated truths**, how could they understand mysteries which were hid from mortal eyes? [Why couldn't they discern them? Because their understanding was warped through a system of rules and rule enforcement. They didn't understand the design laws of God, the principles upon which life was built to operate. Thus they couldn't comprehend deeper truths. If you don't understand the basic rules of math, you

can't understand algebra. The design laws of God are the basics, if we get those wrong then all our other conclusions are going to be distorted.] Jesus did not disdain to repeat old, familiar truths; for He was the author of these truths. He was the glory of the temple. **Truths which had been lost sight of**, which had been misplaced, misinterpreted, and disconnected from their pure position, **He separated from the companionship of error**; and showing them as precious jewels in their own bright luster, **He reset them in their proper framework**, and commanded them to stand fast forever. [He reset them in design law, in reality, all of Jesus' parables teach design law and overthrow imposed law—the governing system of creatures.] What a work was this! It was of such a character that no finite man could comprehend or do it. Only the divine Hand could take the **truth which, from its connection with error, had been serving the cause of the enemy of God and man**, [This is how Satan is most successful, mixing error with truth—as the demons were doing when Jesus silenced them. Today this would be doing something like having 28 true doctrines and then mixing in the lie that God's law works like human law, which requires God to legally enforce the breaking of those doctrines, rules, beliefs. The error about law corrupts the meaning of the correct 28 fundamentals the correct doctrines end up serving the enemy of God as the people are lead to conceive of God as an authoritarian dictator who is required by law to use his power to inflict pain, torture, and death upon the wicked, and who even killed his innocent son to pay our legal penalty, and to whom we must offer the blood of a human sacrifice to avoid his anger and wrath. This was the problem with the Jews 2000 years ago, they had the right doctrines set in the wrong law and thus they rejected and killed Jesus.] and place it where it would glorify God, and be the salvation of humanity. [Only as we return the true doctrines into the setting of design law are we able to present the true doctrines where they bring glory to God and salvation to humanity.] The work of Christ was to give again to the world **the truth in its original freshness and beauty. He represented the spiritual and the heavenly, by the things of nature and experience.** [Here it is again, the integrative evidence-based approach—Scripture is understood only as it functions in reality, in the laws of nature and real-life experiences. The truth of God completely overthrows the human imposed law system, which is a system of made-up rules with artificial externally inflicted punishments. We can only teach with authority when we teach reality, the truth of God's design laws and how it functions in reality.] He gave fresh manna to the hungry soul, presented a new kingdom which was to be set up among men. (Fundamentals of Christian Education 236, emphasis mine).

The Jewish rabbis presented the requirements of the law as a wearing round of exactions. They did just what Satan is doing in our day,—presented the law before the people as a cold, rigid code of commands and traditions. Superstitions buried the light, the glory, the dignity, and far-reaching claims of the law of God. [What is the problem? Imposed law, that lie that God's law functions like human law, made up rules with inflicted punishments, that lead to nonsensical superstitious thinking that darken minds, increase fear and distrust of God, and harden hearts. This is what a legal religion does. This is what penal substitutionary theology does and all theology that teaches God is the source of inflicted pain, suffering, and death. It undermines trust and dethrones human reason. God's design law has far-reaching claims, for God's design laws are the operational basis for everything and reach to the subatomic quantum level of creation itself and it claims that life requires harmony with the

protocols God built it to exist and operate upon.] They professed to speak to the people in the place of God. After the transgression of Adam, the Lord spoke no longer directly with man; the human race was given into the hands of Christ, and all communication came through Him to the world. It was Christ who spoke the **law** on Mount Sinai, and He knew the **bearing of all its precepts**, the glory and majesty of the **law of heaven**. In His sermon on the mount, **Christ defines the law**, and seeks to inculcate in the minds of His hearers the **far-reaching claims** of the precepts of Jehovah. [What did Christ teach? That sin happens in the heart and leads to bad behaviors or deeds, it is the lust in the heart, the hate in the heart. He taught that justice is not the infliction of so-called just punishments, it is not eye for an eye, but it is to love your enemies and pray for those who abuse you. This is design law, how life is built to operate. But Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of a creature who cannot build reality and thus he must make up rules and enforce those rules with inflicted punishments. All the kingdoms of the world work this way and all of them are Satan's. And the Jews accepted this idea of law as God's and thus corrupted and perverted the sacrificial system to teach appeasement and legal payment rather than loving self-sacrifice to heal and restore. Jesus came and reset it all in the light of design law]. His **instructions came as a new revelation** to the people; and the teachers of the law, the scribes and the Pharisees, as well as the common people, were astonished at His doctrine. **The words of Christ were not new**, and yet they came with the force of revelation; for they presented the **truth in its proper light**, and **not in the light in which the teachers had set it** before the people. **He showed no regard for the traditions and commandments of men**, but opened the eyes of their understanding to behold **wondrous things out of the law of God**, which is the **foundation of His throne** from the beginning of the world; and as long as the heavens and the earth remain, through the ceaseless ages of eternity, it will be the great standard of righteousness, holy and just and good. (Fundamentals of Christian Education 237, emphasis mine). [It only seemed new to the people because they were so deeply indoctrinated into the lie that God's law is imposed, that justice is the proper infliction of punishment, that sin is rule-breaking, that God is the source of punishment for sin, that sacrifice is offered to pay the sin-debt to an offended god. They were so deeply indoctrinated into pagan beliefs about God that the truth Jesus revealed seemed completely new to them. And sadly, it is like this in Christianity today. We are not presenting anything new, but it seems new to those who have been indoctrinated into the penal legal way of thinking about things. We are simply doing the work Jesus has called us to do, placing things back in their proper light.]

SABBATH

Read last paragraph,

- This “Sabbath with Jesus” at the beginning of Mark gives the reader a sense of who Jesus is. In the entire section for this week’s lesson, there are very few of His words recorded: a brief call to discipleship, a command to a demon, a plan to visit other locations, and the healing of a leper with instructions to show himself before a priest to be clean. The emphasis is on action, particularly healing people. The Gospel writer likes to use the word immediately to illustrate

the fast-action movement of Jesus' ministry. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 14).

Why did the Jewish religious leaders have a problem with Jesus? Consider, what He actually did—He healed people of diseases, including lepers, He fed the hungry, He visited with the tax-collectors, Samaritans, women, prostitutes—why did these actions cause such hatred from church leadership?

Because they had a law, a legal way of seeing things, and in their minds sickness, disease, poverty, homelessness were God's inflicted punishments for sin—if you keep the law, obey the rules, do right then you receive reward, if you break the law, then you deserve punishment. Jesus, by healing the sick and feeding the poor, was overthrowing their legal religious system. They believed God was punishing people, and who was Jesus to remove it? Remember He even forgave sins!

Consider this historical commentary,

- It was generally believed by the Jews **that sin is punished in this life**. Every **affliction** was regarded as **the penalty of some wrongdoing**, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted.

Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.

Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” **was looked upon by the Jews as “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;”** and they hid their faces from Him. Isaiah 53:4, 3.

God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproofed the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 471, emphasis mine)

They rejected Jesus in His healing of the sick, His raising of the dead, His feeding of the poor because they believed God was punishing such people for law-breaking, and therefore Jesus was doing injustice. This was confirmed in their mind when Jesus Himself was crucified.

Jesus was not concealing the truth, hiding the truth, promoting secrecy, He was confronting the lies through revelation of truth in action, deeds of truth, demonstrations of how reality works—but they were blind guides keeping people blind, just like many Bible teachers today who continue to teach a legal religion.

SUNDAY

Read Mark 1:16-20:

- As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1:16-20 NIV84).

Then read the last paragraph:

- But why does Mark not fill in more details? Likely, it is to emphasize the power of Jesus. He calls, and willing fishermen answer, and their lives, and the world itself, are never the same. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 15).

The lesson makes an assertion, a conclusion, an assumption, applies an interpretation as to why Mark doesn't fill in more of the details and it is to emphasize the power of Jesus—He calls, the voice of His authority has spoken, and it is so compelling they drop everything and follow. Hmmm.... Do you agree?

What are other possible reasons Mark doesn't include more details, as John does?

- Mark's emphasis was simply to identify these initial followers of Jesus establishing Peter, Andrew, James and John as early followers of Jesus.
- His first century audience likely already knew the details of the calling and this is a reminder not intended to be a deep dive into the stuff they already knew.
- Mark wants his letter/gospel to be short and he intentionally abbreviates things to the most salient elements rather than writing a treatise, as he wants the entire letter read in one setting during meetings.
- This was Peter's gospel and it was written to remind the people of what Peter had already told them, which is suggested by the following in 2 Peter:
 - So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. (2 Peter 1:12-15 NIV84).

What of the idea that it is appealing to Jesus' power—well what power? The power of charisma? The power of authority—He commanded them and they were powerless to resist the command?

In Revelation 5 Jesus is represented as a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns, the horns are symbolic of the seven powers of God that Jesus wields, which are:

1. Power of creation (Genesis 1; John 1:1–3,14; Colossians 1:16, 17; Hebrews 1:1, 2)
 - While on earth some believe this was demonstrated when He healed the man born blind. The only way to know in that time if an infant was born blind was if the infant was born without eyes. If it had eyes it is possible they lost vision later, but without eyes we can be certain was born blind. And Jesus healed this man by making mud and rubbing it on his eyes. Some interpret this to mean, just as God in the beginning formed Adam out of the dirt of the earth, that here Jesus formed new eyes out of the dirt wielding the power of creation.
2. Power of truth (John 14:6; Matthew 10:34; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 2:12)
3. Power of love (1 John 3:16, 4:8; John 15:13)
4. Power of life over death; resurrection power (John 11:25, 11:38–44; Romans 1:4; Revelation 1:18)
5. Power to forgive and save/heal from sin (Matthew 1:21, 9:6; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 1:9)
6. Power that sustains and holds all reality together and the laws that govern reality (Matthew 14:25–29; Mark 4:39; Colossians 1:17)
7. Power over time, including foreknowledge—the ability to see through time (Genesis 2:2–3; Joshua 10:12, 13; Daniel 2:28; Isaiah 46:10; Mark 2:28)

So Jesus uses the seven powers of God and none of them are coercive, declarative, proclamations, or imperial.

TUESDAY

Read first four paragraphs,

- After the amazing synagogue service, Jesus retires with His small band of disciples (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to Peter's home, evidently to spend the rest of the Sabbath day in a friendly meal and fellowship.

But a note of concern overshadows the scene: Peter's mother-in-law is ill with a fever, which back then meant you either got better or died. They tell Jesus of the sickness, and He takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand and raises her up. She immediately begins to provide for their needs. What a powerful example of the principle that those who have been saved, healed, by Jesus will minister to others as a result!

Throughout Mark it is often the case that Jesus heals by touching the affected person (see Mark 1:41; Mark 5:41), though other times no touch is mentioned (see Mark 2:1–12, Mark 3:1–6, Mark 5:7–13).

Jesus was not done with ministry that day. After sunset many came to Peter's house for healing, no doubt from seeing what happened at the synagogue that day or from hearing about it. The fact that the Gospel writer does not tell his readers that people delayed because of the hours of the Sabbath indicates that he expected his readers to know about the Sabbath. This feature of Mark is consistent with his readers being Sabbath keepers. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 17).

Does this description raise many questions in your mind? What?

- Why did the people wait until after Sabbath to come to Jesus?
- Were they taught something about the Sabbath that was an actual barrier, hindrance, obstruction keeping them from coming to the Lord of the Sabbath? What?
- Could it be that the Sabbath is a rule made up that requires legal enforcement and there are all types of behaviors one is forbidden from doing on the Sabbath and thus, they were afraid of breaking the Sabbath law by going to Jesus?
- What about today is it possible to present the Bible Sabbath in such a way that it actually makes it harder for people to come to Jesus? Any examples?
- What are we forbidden from doing on the Sabbath?
 - Work—which is defined where in Scripture? It isn't!
 - Is that all we are forbidden from doing? What about disliking the Sabbath? Isaiah 58
 - Isn't true Sabbath keeping when one delights in the Sabbath, so wouldn't that mean we are not supposed to dislike it?
 - And then does the imposed law view, with all its rules and threats, the cause of many people disliking both the Sabbath and the god of the Sabbath and thus the method of legal Sabbath keeping is the very cause of Sabbath breaking, as it changes one's heart to something other than love and trust.
- Was Peter's mother breaking the Sabbath when she began working and serving them? Why or why not?
- What about Jesus, did He break the Sabbath when He healed her? The people were waiting until after the Sabbath to pursue getting healed, should Jesus have also waited to heal her?
- Why did Jesus perform so many miracles on the Sabbath, remember the man who was a paralytic for 38 years (John 5)? Jesus purposely healed him on Sabbath, this wasn't an acute sickness, it was a chronic condition, one more day wouldn't have mattered, or Jesus could have gotten there on Friday—why did Jesus choose the Sabbath to perform His healing?
- What is the purpose of the Sabbath, what is it to reveal to us? What are we to remember when we remember the Sabbath? Aren't we supposed to remember the truth about God—that God rested, that God stopped using power, that God did not use power to punish Lucifer and the rebellious angels, that God does not force people into compliance, that God leaves us free. Thus the Sabbath is God's sign to us that He will heal and save all who trust Him, through His methods of truth presented in love. It is the only way to save any sinner, because the use of might and power to change minds destroys individuality. Thus the Sabbath, God's truth presented in love while leaving us free—how reality works, is the sign that God makes us holy through the application of His design laws.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson focuses on Jesus praying with His Father and encourages us to have an active prayer life. My blog a week ago explored the secret to getting prayers answered, which is to meet the conditions set out by God.

- If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit (John 15:7, 8 NKJV).

When we abide in Jesus, our hearts are surrendered to Him; our minds hunger for truth and actively assimilate His Word into our hearts; our attitudes, desires, motives, and longings are changed from selfishness to love; and we desire to glorify God. Then, with hearts that live to give glory to God, to uplift Jesus, to advance His kingdom, our prayers are gladly received and God answers them with the wisdom of His infinite foreknowing self. His answers will meet our true need and His greater purposes, and we, who live in abiding trust, rejoice in the varied ways and timing of God's response.

But there are many prayers that God does not pay attention to—prayers that God does not “listen” to or answer.

- **The selfish prayer:** God does not answer the selfish prayer because such prayer, no matter how religiously it may be phrased, means: “Give me what I want so I can continue to rebel against you, injure my soul, waste resources, and harm others.”
- **The pretender prayer:** A prayer from a person who doesn't actually believe in God but prays to manipulate others who do believe. “He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV).
- **The proud prayer:** A prayer people make to be seen; to advance themselves as more righteous, more holy, better than others; to be recognized as a religious leader and gain power over others; or to put others down. It was the prayer of the Pharisee recorded in Luke: “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess” (18:11, 12 NKJV).
- **The rejector-of-truth prayer:** A prayer said by those who may even be praying for the right thing but do so while they knowingly deny truth and choose what they know is wrong. This would be a person who prays for better lung function while continuing to smoke, or a person who prays for a happy and healthy marriage while they commit adultery.
- **The whiny, complaining, negative prayer:** The kind of prayer made with no interest in resolution, no desire to work things out, no desire to mature themselves, to heal, to change the destructive feelings, no openness to hear God speak, but simply to lodge a complaint and justify their role as victim and how life is not fair to them.
- **The proforma prayer:** The prayer done by rote, by ritual, by form without any thought or active engagement of the heart in pursuit of a connection with God. Man looks on the outward appearance (other humans can observe the act of performing a prayer), but God looks upon the heart and knows when the person is not praying but merely reciting a ritual.

While there are many prayers that God does not pay attention to, God smiles upon and longs to hear prayers from honest hearts, from people who believe in Him and genuinely desire to connect with Him, to know His will, hear His voice, abide in His presence, be transformed by His love, be strengthened by His power to carry out His will, those who have surrendered self and long to give glory to Him by growing daily in truth, to become mature Christians who manifest His character, and have the ability to live the principles of God, to apply the methods of God in how they govern themselves and treat others.

God will answer all such prayers!

I encourage you to pray—daily and often—but make prayer a conversation with God; talk to Him like you would talk with a friend, which means you must know Him, have faith in Him, and come to understand Him. And make your most intimate prayers private, seeking solitary places to commune with heaven, places without distractions, where you can abide in the quiet and hear the still small voice of God responding (1 Kings 19:12). When you know Him, you will understand His methods, His design laws, and will be more sensitive to His answers, for just as you would with a true friend, you will realize that He will not give certain responses because they are out of character for Him.

And when you encounter moments that seem to be silence, remember that God is your friend and ask yourself what would you do or think if your human friend responded with silence. Wouldn't you reflect and think, "What did I just ask? Do I already know the truth, the right course, the best action, but want something different and my friend is giving me time to reconsider?" Then when silence seems to be God's response, apply that wisdom and ask: "Is this a problem that I already know the answer to, that God has previously led me to solve? Do I need to solve this one on my own because God has given me the wisdom, principles, and methods already and now I need to apply them so I can mature and grow rather than seeking Him to tell me every answer?" If so, then ask God for the confirmation to proceed and apply His methods to the situation, actively remembering the vital truths applicable to your situation, thinking through your choices, and keeping your heart open to His leading while you move forward with a thankful heart, also remembering that Jesus has promised never to leave us or forsake us and that we can receive His power as long as our hearts are actively seeking to glorify Him.

Finally, if you are praying for strength to do God's will, you must remember that we do not receive the strength for the task *until* we choose to apply the truth and engage in the mission. The smoker doesn't get the strength to quit until they choose to quit; the runner doesn't get the endurance to finish the race until they are running the race; the waters do not part until our feet get wet. (See Joshua 3:13.)

The next time you pray, remember Jesus' promise:

- And I will do whatever you ask—that is in harmony with my character, methods, and principles—so that the Son may bring honor and glory to the Father by revealing the healing and life-giving power of his methods. You may ask me for anything in harmony with my character and methods, and I will do it (John 14:13, 14 REM).

THURSDAY

The lesson focuses on healing of a leper. In the Bible, leprosy was a metaphor for sin—and it is an excellent metaphor because, leprosy destroys the pain fibers so when one touches a hot stove they don't feel pain and thus they experience much more damage than if they did feel pain.

Sin sears the conscience and thus we don't feel conviction, guilt, shame, or discomfort and persist in destructive living doing much more damage to our souls.

Read third paragraph,

- Jesus, however, is moved with compassion toward the man and touches him. “Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed’ ” (Mark 1:41, NKJV). This action should have defiled Jesus until the evening, when He would be required to bathe to become ritually pure again (compare with Leviticus 13–15). But Mark is clear that Jesus' action of touching the sick man cleanses him of his leprosy. Thus, Jesus was not defiled by touching the man. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 19).

Do you agree that Jesus was not defiled by touching the man?

Jesus became sin though He knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Jesus was not defiled by becoming sin, instead in Jesus sin was destroyed, death was destroyed, life was restored, sin was purged, humanity was cleansed from sin in Jesus Christ.

If we were to represent this symbolically what are the symbols for the cleansing life of Jesus—flesh and blood of the sacrificial animal, bread and wine. And in the OT system, did the blood of the sacrificial animal cleanse or defile? It cleansed.

Then why do some teach that the blood applied to the sanctuary defiled the sanctuary?

Jesus instructed the leper not to tell it was Jesus who healed him? Why? Because it would risk the priests rejecting him and refusing to declare him cleansed and allowing him back into the community.

Notice here the conflict between reality—design law and made up imposed law. When Jesus healed the leper that was reality, the leper was clean, no longer a leper. Will the acknowledgement of the priest change that reality? No, the leper was leprosy free no matter what the priest says, however, the Jewish community is not operating upon design law, it is operating upon civil law, made up rules, and the word of the priest and the enforcement of their soldiers and the community is not based on reality, but on declaration—the word of the priest.

Jesus did not want this man to be rejected by the made up laws now that he was actually healed.

Further, Jesus didn't want the people to create such a stir about Him at that time that it would motivate His enemies to become more active in opposing Him and thus hindering His ministry.

But the man after being confirmed by the priest as being healed, broadcast loudly that Jesus had healed him.

The lesson describes it in the last paragraph like this:

- But the cleansed leper does not seem to understand this, and in disobedience to Jesus' command, he spreads the news far and wide, making it impossible for Jesus to enter towns openly for His ministry. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 19).

Do you agree that the man was in disobeying the Lord? Hmm...this is how one sees things when one accepts Satan's lies about God's law. Jesus gave a command, you didn't behave the way He instructed, and therefore you are in disobedience. It is all about behavior rather than motivation.

Was the man doing this because he was rebelling against Jesus, or because he was for Jesus? This is not a reflection of a person disobeying but a person misunderstanding and being immature but who is still doing what they are doing from a heart seeking to uplift the Lord.