

# STONE HARBOR

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## Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters

### I. The Redeemer of Sinners

#### A. *Some Notes on Mark 2:13-17*

- Jesus calls particular people: Levi, son of Alphaeus; Lori, daughter of Dean, Johnny, son of Nathaniel...one by one. There are lots of Christians, but Jesus seems to deal with each individually, one on one.
- Levi was a tax collector, not a profession that endeared him to his fellow citizens. Collecting money from your countrymen to give to the occupying power. He was probably disliked by both Jews and Romans alike who could see the sliminess of the profession. Tax collectors are lumped in with sinners as if the two went so well together that they were always mentioned in the same breath – where you'd find one, you'd find the other.
- Jesus called Levi, a card carrying member of this group of sinners, to follow Him. This choice of people is startling. It seemed much more appropriate and wholesome for Jesus to call fishermen to follow Him as we read in chapter 1 that He did. I can see calling hard working fishermen because I can imagine them being a good lot of men. But here Jesus surprises us and calls tax collectors and sinners. It would sort of be like today him calling Wall Street Executives...
- Jesus and His disciples were eating and drinking with these guys! This is a three time repeated fact. (2:15,16) Surprising again, He not only brings a message to them with his teaching; but he also appears to hang out with them. What message did this send to sinners? If I were one of those sinners Jesus chose to call back then, I would see Jesus as non-judgmental, caring. It would be as if his actions were saying, My disciples and I will meet you where

you are, you are valuable to us, we are not above you, although society does not consider you worthy of sharing time with we do...

- Jesus "call" upon these people was, "follow Me."

### ***B. Jesus is the Redeemer of Sinners***

- Jesus takes tax gathers and sinners and calls them to follow Him. He redeems them from dishonor to honor, from people scorned by men to people called by the King. He calls people to follow Him who by all accounts were not worthy of such intimacy of God. They were not noble people they were dishonest, self serving opportunists who benefited by abusing other men's misfortune.
- Indeed Jesus made it explicitly clear that these were the type of people He came to call saying, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
- If you are one of Jesus' redeemed, you are a sinner, a redeemed one, but a sinner non- the-less. There is no room for you, Christian, to think you are a followers of Jesus because you pre-qualified for the job by your own merits. In fact the only thing that qualifies you for the position of follower of Jesus is your sinfulness. Crazy isn't it? Look around the room. We are sinners, redeemed by the call of Jesus who was big enough to stoop to our level.

### ***C. The Redeemer's Impact on You***

- **Who Jesus is should change who we are!** Jesus is the Redeemer of sinners. That should effects us. That should change us. We were sinners. Now we are redeemed sinners and followers of the King of the Kingdom of God. We are changed from most despicable among men, to most honored by God. I am not Johnny a good guy God thought would be good enough to be worthy of hanging out with. I am Johnny, selfish sinner, looking out for my greatest pleasure, who God condescended and came to me in my weakness and flaws and said, follow Me. All of you who I know, I know this to be your story too. Those of you who I don't know, if I had known you before Jesus came to you, I would have discovered this to be your story too.
- Jesus redeemed Levi, and me. If He has already redeemed you, I ask you to act on your privileged status as one has called to follow Jesus. Begin asking, "What do you want me to do with my life you have redeemed? Why did You call me into Your company? Was it to do just what I am doing now? Or, do I need to adjust my life activities to be doing what You redeemed me to do? If you know there needs to be action, note that in the lower right hand corner of your Transformation Card.

## II. The “Redefiner” of Religion

### A. *Some Notes on Mark 2:18-22*

- We find ourselves as Chapter 2 begins to enter the phase of Jesus ministry when He is stirring up controversy. It started when He told the paralytic that his sins were forgiven, and the religious leaders correctly questioned, “Who can forgive sin but God alone?” Here this controversy continues.
- Jesus’ disciples were different than other disciples: engaged in different religious activities. Specifically, while Jesus was with them they did not fast! Their non-participation in the normal religious activities gave another cause for the religious leaders of the day to take offence.
- Sounds like fasting was a generally accepted religious activity of the religious minded of the day.
- Jesus non participation of fasting bugged those who had to fast according to their faith. No doubt they thought that was an unfair advantage of this new upstart faith. You don’t require your disciples to fast. That’s no fair, everyone will be attracted to your easy religion... Now if you were truly religious you would fast, like us.
- Jesus answered the complaint by showing **the inappropriateness of the old religious practices in light of the new reality of His presence**. There are some things you just don’t do when certain people are with you. I bet there are certain things you can think of that you wish people wouldn’t do when they are with you.
- But beyond annoyance, or discomfort, or social embarrassment, Jesus’ presence made certain common religious practices inappropriate. One of those was this practice of fasting.
- Fasting Explained – In it’s most abstract conception, fasting is done to bridge some gap and to fix some problem between yourself and God. It is taking in less natural so you can get more supernatural. Depriving yourself of food so you can get more of God.
- Jesus in effect said, it is not appropriate to have my disciples fast while I am here. It is just like the situation of a bridegroom...  
19 And Jesus said to them, “**While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.**”
- But this is not about a permanent doing away of the religious practice of fasting. It is about the inappropriateness of doing it **when Jesus is with** His disciples.

So long as they have the bridegroom **with them**, they cannot fast. 20 "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and **then** they will fast **in that day**."

- Jesus Gives Two Examples of Inappropriate Fixes to Earthly Problems
  - Problem: Fixing Old Clothes  
21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results.  
Problem: Storing New Wine  
22 "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."

## ***B. Jesus is the Redefiner of Religion***

When Jesus is with His disciples, there is no proximity problem. Jesus disciples are more like attendants of a bridegroom than they are people wanting to close the gap between themselves and God. In Jesus presence, the gap between man and God is closed! They have been asked by the bridegroom Himself to be a part of His wedding party. They are **in**, and this is a time to be with, enjoy, attend the groom and shine the spotlight on Him. No fasting, let's celebrate! By His presence Jesus redefined what was appropriate religion.

## ***C. Religion Redefined by Jesus***

### **1. Then (Jesus on earth)**

#### **a) Not Fasting**

- For Jesus disciples to fast when He was with them bodily, would have been as foolish as a few guys with trucks and shovels trying to build another bridge across the mouth of San Francisco bay, when the Golden gate bridge was already complete.
- Or a herald shouting "Make way for the King" when the King is already seated on his throne in the room.

#### **b) But "Attending"**

There is no problem to solve when Jesus is with you. The religious practices that are called for are those similar to the attendants of the bridegroom: attending, celebrating, enjoying time with...

## **2. Now (KOG at hand, but Jesus in heaven. The Already by Not Yet)**

Should His disciples ever fast, should we fast? Sure, although we have the Holy Spirit within us we do not have Jesus bodily with us. We live in the time theologians have labeled, “the already but not yet.” The Kingdom of God (KOG) has already come, but it is not yet fully realized in our lives. Sin is paid for but it still affects us. Peace between God and man is secured, but it still alludes us. We have already been declared righteous by God, yet we still slip into unrighteous acts. Friendship with God has been made possible, but disobedience still strains it. We have the assurance of eternal life in Christ, but we will all die. ...

### **a) How We Practice Our Redefined Religion**

How has Jesus redefined our religion? What religious practices should we do living in the time of the already but not yet?

#### **(1) We Realize “the Already”**

##### **(a) Fasting**

Fasting can be one way to help us focus on the invisible reality of the KOG when it is much easier to see the reality of the kingdom of this world.

##### **(b) Spiritual Disciplines Exercised in Faith**

Bible Reading, Prayer, Scripture Memorization & Meditation, Prayer all that reminds us of the invisible real.

#### **(2) Do what He has called us to do until He returns**

##### **(a) Love God & One Another**

##### **(b) Make Disciples**

##### **(c) Be His Witnesses**

## **III. The “Reinterpreter” of Scripture**

### **A. Notes on Mark 2:23-28**

#### **1. Sabbath**

- Modeled by God in creation

- Initiated as a practice in the wilderness where God provided mana each day with twice as much on the 6<sup>th</sup> day so they would not have to collect any on the 7<sup>th</sup> or Sabbath day. (Ex 16)
- Made a Part of God's Law in 10 commandments (Ex 20)
- Controversial: difficult to determine what is allowed activity and what was disallowed. God wanted it to be a day of rest, what can and what can we not do on this day? By the time of Jesus the religious leaders had built a bigger wall around the Sabbath than God had intended.
- Sabbath was a big thing in the lives of the God fearing Jewish who conscientiously endeavored to observe it.
- I can appreciate their heart, "I want to do what God has commanded me to do." But, it appears they had missed the heart of God's intention behind the Sabbath law.
- Sabbath observance was part of God's Law. You did this under the Old Covenant if you wanted to be right with God and receive His blessing and avoid His cursing.

## **2. Pharisees**

- Noted for their high degree of devotion to the Jewish law, these religious leaders were first people with deep convictions about their God and who applied great intentionality in their devotion to Him.
- They were in conflict to Jesus, here and many more times in the life of Jesus, but they were not irreligious. They valued God and His law very highly. Nicodemus and Gamaliel, were two Pharisees we can look to with positive opinions of.
- It is true that Jesus contended with many of them and pointed out among other flaws, their hypocrisy.
- It is probably best not to only look down on them, but to realize that we are at risk to fall into the same traps they did as we intentionally follow after God.

## **3. Jesus Argues From Scripture**

### **a) Have you not read...?**

### **b) Logic of Conversation**

- Jesus: David did it (broke the Sabbath law by your accounts) and you find no fault with him because He is your hero.
- Pharisees: Yeah, but You are no David.
- Jesus: Here is the meaning of the Sabbath that you missed, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not

man for the Sabbath.” I am greater than David, I am Lord of the Sabbath.

- Talk about the purest meaning of the statement being above the law. When a normal man disobeys the laws of the land thinking they do not apply to him because he believes himself to be above the law, we are quick to think ill of that person. But, we are equally quick to concede that God, the perfect lawgiver, is Himself above the law which He gave to man to observe.
- Here we see Jesus calling Himself “the Son of Man” and saying, He is Lord even of the Sabbath. Lord of the Law.
- As Lord of the Law, Jesus is the one to most accurately interpret the Law.
- By the time of Jesus the Law was misinterpreted and in need of being reinterpreted.

### ***B. Jesus is the Re-Interpreter of Scripture***

We see Jesus here explain Scripture to the Pharisees who were themselves the chief adherents to and champions of those same Scriptures, especially the Law.

### ***C. How Jesus as Re-Interpreter Effects Us***

- Try as we may, we are probably always going to miss God’s heart a bit when we try to understand Scriptures.
- As we struggle with the meaning of Scriptures we can let Jesus help us.
- We can learn even from this passage the Sabbath law was not intended to impose some arbitrary restriction on man, but it was made for the good of man.
- If we are to understand the OT Laws we must read Jesus’ NT re-interpretation of those laws. With these we can get at the heart of God in His law giving.
- What do we find when we listen to the Master Teacher and the Re-Interpreter of the Scriptures? We find a God who loves us – a God who places restrictions on us for our good – a God who places more value in us than in the Law.
- If we are to understand the NT Scriptures we must read Jesus words and examine His actions.
- Jesus re-interpretation of the Scriptures help us go for and get at the heart of God.
  - Heb 1 -- 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made

the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature...

- May we be wise enough to be students of the whole Bible and wiser still to allow Jesus to re-interpret Scripture we may have misinterpreted or under interpreted because we have not carefully considered His explanation.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus is our redeemer, the re-definer of our religion, and the re-interpreter of Scripture. I encourage you to embrace Him in each of these capacities. Follow Him with appreciation for the privilege that it is to be called by Him into His company of disciples. Let your religious practices be defined by Him: love, make disciples, be His witnesses. Finally let Him interpret Scriptures for you. What is the meaning of Scripture? Look to Jesus, both His words and His deeds and you will find the heart behind the letter.