

## **How Does God's Kingdom Clash with the Kingdoms of this World?** **Mark 3:1-21**

*Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. <sup>2</sup> And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup> And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.*

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea <sup>8</sup> and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. <sup>9</sup> And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, <sup>10</sup> for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. <sup>11</sup> And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." <sup>12</sup> And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.*

*<sup>13</sup> And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and have authority to cast out demons. <sup>16</sup> He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); <sup>17</sup> James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); <sup>18</sup> Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

*<sup>20</sup> Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. <sup>21</sup> And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."*

- Mark 3:1-21, ESV

What do Pharisees, Herodians and demons all have in common? No, this isn't the set-up line for a really bad joke. Rather, today's passage reveals how the powers of this fallen world, usually in opposition to each other, are united in their opposition to Jesus, His Gospel and His kingdom.

Pharisees and Herodians were not natural friends. Pharisees were Jewish nationalists and religious purists, who sought to see Romans rule over Judea overthrown. They thought that by keeping the law, especially the Sabbath, the Jewish people could earn a deliverance from God out of the hands of their enemies. The Herodians supported Herod and his family in their rule over God's people. Thus, they supported the reign of Edomite puppets of Rome, the oppressors of God's people. Normally, these two groups would have nothing in common, but they held counsel together against Jesus, to destroy Him.

Then, right after the Pharisees and Herodians conspire together against Jesus, we see Jesus taking the offensive against Satan. He casts out demons and then gives His disciples authority to preach the Gospel and cast out demons. Thus, we see that Jesus' reign not only threatens the religious and political power-brokers but the spiritual oppressors of God's people, too.

Jesus' kingdom comes into the world through the proclamation of the Gospel and the demonstration of His salvation power. As His kingdom comes, it is a direct challenge to all who would hold onto power for themselves and for their own glory - especially if the exercise of that power involves the oppression of God's people. This is spiritual warfare, kingdom conflict fueled by the Gospel light breaking into the darkness and the salvation of God breaking the chains of bondage from God's people.

The call for the church is to preach the Gospel and demonstrate the salvation of God in transformed lives lived in community and outreach to the world. We are to preach the Gospel and seek to set the prisoners free from Satan's deception and oppression. As we do so, we should fully expect opposition. We should anticipate hatred from the world, not because we hate them, but because our king threatens their power.

In the midst of this kingdom conflict, we should maintain our confidence and joy, knowing that the decisive victory has already been won. We should also remember that we are not called to fight using the world's weapons or methods. Our weapons are the word of God, prayer and love. We will never truly win if we betray our king and His kingdom priorities. But following Him, we already have the victory!