

## Mark 3:1-6 Exercise

### Jesus Heals a Man with a Withered Hand

**3:1** And again he went into the synagogue and there was a man there with a withered hand.

2 And they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse him. 3 And Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, 'Get up and come into the middle (of these people).' 4 And he said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do bad, to save life or to kill?' And they were silent. 5. And looking around at them with anger, deeply grieved with them at the hardness of their hearts, he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand'. And he stretched it out and his hand was restored'. 6 And leaving, the Pharisees immediately took counsel against him with the Herodians as to how they could destroy him.

What is Jesus' argument to justify his actions? How does it compare with other arguments in other gospel texts to support his action on the Sabbath? Is it the same as the argument he offers in any of these:

- 1 Matt 12:9-14
- 2 Luke 13:10-17
- 3 Luke 14:1-6
- 4 John 5:16-19

### Matthew 12:9-14

9 He went on from there and entered their synagogue. 10 And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"— so that they might accuse him. 11 He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." 13 Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. 14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

### Luke 13:10-17

10 Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11 And there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." 13 And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. 14 But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." 15 Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? 16 And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" 17 As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

### Luke 14:1-6

1 One Sabbath, when he went to dine at the house of a ruler of the Pharisees, they were watching him carefully. 2 And behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy. 3 And Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" 4 But they remained silent. Then he took him and healed him and sent him away. 5 And he said to them,

“Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?” 6 And they could not reply to these things.

### **John 5:16-19**

16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” 18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. 19 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

## **Do these Jewish texts help us understand Jesus’ argument?**

### **1. Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 14:225-227 (written c. 95 A.D.):**

In the presidency of Artemon, on the first day of the month of Lenaeon [i.e. January 24<sup>th</sup> 43 B.C.], Dolabella, Imperator, to the magistrates, council and people of Ephesus, greeting,

Alexander, son of Theodorus, the envoy of Hyrcanus, son of Alexander the high priest and ethnarch of the Jews, has explained to me that his citizens cannot undertake military service because they may not bear arms or march on the days of the Sabbath; nor can they obtain the native foods to which they are accustomed. I therefore, like the governors before me, grant them exemption from military service and allow them to follow their native customs and to come together for sacred and holy rites in accordance with their law, and to make offerings for their sacrifices; and it is my wish that you write these instructions of the various cities.

### **2. 1 Maccabees 2:29-41**

1 Maccabees describes the revolt of faithful, Torah-pious Jews against Greek oppression in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.:

At that time [c. 168 B.C.] many who were seeking righteousness and justice went down to the wilderness to live there, 30 they, their sons, their wives, and their livestock, because troubles pressed heavily upon them. 31 And it was reported to the [Greek] king’s officers, and to the [occupying] troops in Jerusalem the city of David, that those who had rejected the king’s command had gone down to the hiding places in the wilderness. 32 Many pursued them, and overtook them; they encamped opposite them and prepared for battle against them on the Sabbath day. 33 They said to them, “Enough of this! Come out and do what the king commands, and you will live.” 34 But they said, “We will not come out, nor will we do what the king commands and so profane the Sabbath day.” 35 Then the enemy quickly attacked them. 36 But they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places, 37 for they said, “Let us all die in our innocence; heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly.” 38 So they attacked them on the Sabbath, and they died, with their wives and children and livestock, to the number of a thousand persons.

39 When Mattathias [the leader of the Jewish revolt] and his friends learned of it, they mourned for them deeply. 40 And all said to their neighbours: “If we all do as our kindred have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth.” 41 So they made this decision that day: “*Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the Sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places.*”

### 3. Different 'versions' of Genesis 2:2

**The Greek Translation (called the Septuagint) of the Hebrew of Genesis 1:31-2:2 (date 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. B.C.)**

1:31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 And the heavens and the earth were finished, and the whole world of them. 2 And God finished on the sixth day his works which he made, and he ceased ( ) on the seventh day from all his works which he made.

**The Hebrew of Genesis 2:1-2 says:**

1:31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 So, the heavens and the earth were finished, and wall the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

### **Philo of Alexandria (1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. – c. 20 B.C. – 50 A.D.)**

Philo in his work 'On the Cherubim' explains that the Sabbath belongs to God. It is God's rest

... '... For in truth there is but one thing in the universe which rests, that is God. But Moses does not give the name of rest to mere inactivity. The cause of all things is by its nature active; it never ceases to work all that is best and most beautiful. God's rest is rather a working with absolute ease, without toil and without suffering.' (On the Cherubim §87)

In another place, Philo says:

'For God never ceases making, but just as it's the property of fire to burn and of the snow to chill, so it is the property of God to make: and all the more so, by far, in as much as he is also to everything else the source/beginning of action. It is fitting, moreover, that Moses says "caused to rest" ( ) not "rested" ( ); for he causes to rest ... but he himself never ceases making.' (*Allegorical Interpretation* Book 1, 5).

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