

## Healing a Withered Hand or New Wine and Old Bottles.

Scripture Readings: Luke 6.1-11, Matthew 12.1-14, Mark 3.1-6

The reading begins with the conjunction 'And' in the Authorised Version which is unfortunately missed in the newer bibles. It comes from a word more often translated 'but' giving it a contrary feeling. Despite being taught about the folly of placing a new cloth patch on an old garment or new wine in old skins (Luke 5.33-39) the Pharisees persisted in judging the new teaching of Jesus by old covenant traditions. They missed the point. The plucking of the grain and the healing of the withered hand demonstrate its significance.

### Old bottles.

And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days? Luke 6.2  
Luke uses a curious description of the Sabbath when the hungry disciples (Matthew) passed through the corn field (Mark) and plucked the grain, rubbing it in their hands to remove the husks (Luke), for he says it was on the second-first Sabbath as it is accurately translated by the Authorised Version. Most newer translations skip over this unusual statement, but Edersheim (3.35) shows it to point to the first Sabbath after the second day of Passover while the barley harvest would be still standing in the field.

The old bottles in this instance was the law of the Sabbath, but we see it as typical of all mere religion. The Pharisees had intricate laws, a system of the division of labour. Plucking was reaping, rubbing was threshing, blowing the husks away was winnowing each of which on the Sabbath was a sin attracting its own punishment and requiring a separate sin offering.

### New wine.

The Son of man is lord of the Sabbath.

Luke 6.5  
As lord Jesus has the authority over the Sabbath, therefore He is greater.  
Matthew's account gives added detail from a Jewish perspective. There His reply from their own traditions had three parts to it  
First, He told how David had done what was normally forbidden Matthew 12.3 - 1 Samuel 21.6.  
Second, He referred to the priests who worked on the Sabbath Matthew 12.5 - Numbers 28.9 for example.  
Third, He showed how God desired kindness and mercy in life, not religious ritual Matthew 12.7 - Hosea 6.6.  
It is not that David could do these things because he was a king but because he like the priests was at the time performing the work of the Lord and had a need for food. The Lord taught that the disciples were likewise guiltless. Matthew 12.7.

Because they could not see beyond the ritual and rules they missed the reality of what God was doing right in their midst. Matthew 12.6.

A great number were healed in those days (Luke 6.19) and among them a man with a withered right hand. Early para-Christian writings say that he was a mason and asked Jesus to heal him so that he would not have to beg, but this is not substantiated. Luke writing in Greek recorded that his right hand was 'dried up'. This occurred on another Sabbath (Luke 6.6), and the Pharisees watched closely to catch Him healing on the Sabbath.

Knowing their thoughts He asked, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it?" Luke 6.9.

Jesus knew their law permitted life saving acts for a Jew or an animal on the Sabbath (Matthew 12.11&12), if for an animal then so much more for a man. He also argued that to not do good was in fact to do evil, which would be a desecration of the Sabbath.

The Pharisees were thus inflamed but silenced. Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand. He did so. The tense of the verb used suggests

This passage tells about the emerging motives of the Jewish leaders which caused them to eventually crucify God's anointed, Jesus. But there is a lesson in it for us. Let us learn the lesson. God does not want religion with all its rules and ritual. This world abounds with religions, all telling us what we must do to make ourselves acceptable to God. God is not impressed with our self effort, even our self sacrifice. In sending His Son into this world to die, God has done all that is necessary. For God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. What God wants is for us to accept His provision in His anointed one. He then sends His Spirit to make it happen. Our part is but to trust Him.

Having thus received God's provision for our sin we are reconciled to Him. God now desires us to live in fellowship with Him. The real Christian life is a relationship, a close communion with God and through Him to others. "You were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1Co 1:9 This is possible for all who come to Him, God put into them His Holy Spirit to make it happen. The real Christian life is relationship not ritual.

that in the doing his right hand was restore to it's former state.

Dr Luke's description of this event tells us that it was a creative act, not a therapeutic manipulation. Jesus did not touch the patient. He was healed at His command and by his trust in Jesus as evidenced by his obedience.

### The bottles begin to burst.

And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus v11. 'Filled with madness', was more than anger for the word for madness as Luke used it means a want of understanding, irrational behaviour or folly, as it is in 2 Timothy 3.9. Previously they were reasoning, (Luke 5.21) or calculating the implication and meaning of the actions of Jesus. They now reacted from prejudice without attempting to understand the miracle they had seen, or the words of Jesus used to explain it.

Matthew adds that the Pharisees began to plot the removal of Jesus.

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