

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Session 5, Fasting and the Sabbath (Mark 2:18-28) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Jennings, Mark, Session 5, Fasting and the Sabbath (Mark 2:18-28), Biblicalearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mark Jennings' lecture, the fifth session on Mark 2:18-28, examines Jesus' continuing public ministry and the escalating conflicts with religious leaders. The lecture analyzes controversies surrounding fasting, explaining Jesus' self-identification as the bridegroom bringing a new era of joy. Jennings then explores the Sabbath controversy where Jesus defends his disciples' actions by citing scripture and declaring that the Sabbath was made for humanity, not the other way around. He highlights Jesus' assertion as the "Son of Man," holding authority even over the Sabbath, thus establishing his divine identity. These confrontations, focused on deviations from traditional practices, reveal Jesus' growing authority and foreshadow further conflict with the religious establishment. The lecture emphasizes how Jesus' teachings and actions presented a fundamental challenge to existing religious norms.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Jennings, Mark, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Mark).



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3. Briefing Document: Jennings, Mark, Session 5, Fasting and the Sabbath (Mark 2:18-28)

Briefing Document: Dr. Mark Jennings on Mark 2:18-28 - The Public Ministry Continues

1. Executive Summary:

This briefing document summarizes Dr. Mark Jennings' lecture on Mark 2:18-28, focusing on the escalating controversies between Jesus and the religious leaders during his public ministry. The lecture highlights two key incidents: the questioning of Jesus' disciples not fasting (verses 18-22) and the dispute over the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath (verses 23-28). Jennings emphasizes how these controversies reveal Jesus' unique authority, his presentation of a "new" reality in his presence, and his claims to divine prerogative, ultimately setting the stage for greater conflict.

2. Main Themes and Important Ideas:

2.1. The Growing Conflict:

- Jennings underscores the increasing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders, building upon earlier hints of division. He states, "What was hinted at before now starts, that division starts to become more and more pronounced."
- Mark's narrative structure of presenting controversies in succession is highlighted, suggesting a deliberate build-up of opposition. "Mark will often present controversies right in a row and so there is a way that what has happened previously is informing what is occurring."

2.2. The Controversy over Fasting (Mark 2:18-22):

- **The Question:** Some people (potentially including earnest questioners and those seeking to trap Jesus) question why John's disciples and the Pharisees fast, but Jesus' disciples do not. "Some people came and asked Jesus how is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting but yours are not?"
- **Jesus' Response: The Bridegroom Analogy:** Jesus likens his presence with his disciples to a wedding celebration, where fasting would be inappropriate. He refers to his disciples as "the sons of the bridegroom" (or "guests of the bridegroom"), emphasizing their close relationship and the celebratory nature of his presence. "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot so long as they have him with them."

- **Jesus as the Bridegroom:** Jennings points out the significance of Jesus implicitly presenting himself as the bridegroom, drawing potential parallels to Old Testament depictions of God as a bridegroom (Isaiah 54, 62; Ezekiel 16) and the future wedding banquet. This hints at a claim to divine identity.
- **Foreshadowing of Suffering:** Jesus predicts a time when "the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast." Jennings interprets this as a foreshadowing of Jesus' arrest, death, and burial, moments of "heartache and yearning" that would necessitate fasting.
- **The Analogy of the Patch and Wineskins:** Jesus uses the parables of the unshrunk patch on an old garment and new wine in old wineskins to illustrate the incompatibility of the "new" reality he brings with old traditions and practices. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment... No one pours new wine into old wineskins." This signifies that the coming of God in Jesus' presence requires a "forceful rethinking of things."

2.3. The Controversy over the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28):

- **The Incident:** Jesus' disciples pick heads of grain while walking through a field on the Sabbath, leading the Pharisees to accuse them of doing what is unlawful (reaping). "One Sabbath, Jesus was going through the grain fields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"
- **Jesus' Defense: The Example of David:** Jesus defends his disciples by citing the Old Testament example of David and his hungry companions eating the consecrated bread, which was normally reserved for priests (1 Samuel 21). "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar, the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread..." This demonstrates a precedent for prioritizing human need over ritualistic practice.
- **Jesus' Statement on the Purpose of the Sabbath:** Jesus declares, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Jennings highlights the radical nature of this statement, suggesting Jesus is revealing the divine intent behind the Sabbath as a gift for humanity's benefit (rest, worship, recovery). This goes beyond simply justifying his disciples' actions and asserts his understanding of God's purpose.

- **Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath:** Jesus concludes by stating, "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Jennings emphasizes that "Son of Man" here is likely a Christological title rooted in Daniel 7, signifying authority and power. He argues against interpreting "Son of Man" merely as "man" in this context, citing Jesus' earlier claim of authority to forgive sins as a parallel. "He isn't just the expected Messiah that's come, but there's something more. He's come with the power to forgive sins... It was their authority to say what was right or wrong on the Sabbath and Jesus says, I know why the Sabbath exists for I am the Lord of the Sabbath."

3. Significance and Implications:

- These controversies serve to progressively reveal Jesus' unique authority and his challenge to the established religious order.
- Jesus' actions and teachings indicate a "new state of affairs" brought about by his presence, demanding a shift in understanding and practice.
- His claims regarding the Sabbath and his implicit identification as the bridegroom and the Lord of the Sabbath point towards his divine identity, setting him on a collision course with the religious authorities.
- The lecture highlights the tension between ritual and human need, with Jesus consistently prioritizing the latter within the intended purpose of God's laws.

4. Noteworthy Quotes:

- "His purity is stronger than the leper's impurity." (Regarding the previous encounter with the leper)
- "Jesus is painting a scene of what is currently occurring with the bridegroom. With the disciples and him, it's akin to a bridal celebration."
- "That something is different in my presence. A very, very strong statement." (Regarding why the disciples are not fasting)
- "The coming of God is very different and is much more potent and is much stronger and it comes in my presence."
- "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."
- "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
- "He's establishing his authority on the plane of God, not on the plane of humanity."

5. Looking Ahead:

Jennings concludes by anticipating further conflicts in chapter three, particularly concerning exorcisms, where the lines of division between Jesus and the religious leaders will become even more clearly defined.

4. Study Guide: Jennings, Mark, Session 5, Fasting and the Sabbath (Mark 2:18-28)

Mark 2:18-28 Study Guide: The Public Ministry Continues

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What was the specific question posed to Jesus regarding fasting in Mark 2:18?
2. According to Jesus' analogy, who are the "sons of the bridal chamber" and why is fasting inappropriate while the bridegroom is with them?
3. What do the parables of the unshrunk cloth on an old garment and new wine in old wineskins illustrate about Jesus' ministry?
4. What specific action of Jesus' disciples on the Sabbath sparked controversy with the Pharisees in Mark 2:23-24?
5. What Old Testament figure and event did Jesus reference to defend his disciples' actions on the Sabbath?
6. What was the core principle Jesus stated regarding the purpose of the Sabbath in Mark 2:27?
7. What does Jesus declare himself to be Lord of in Mark 2:28?
8. What is the significance of the title "Son of Man" that Jesus uses for himself, particularly in the context of Mark 2:28?
9. According to the lecture, how did Jesus' authority, as demonstrated in the healing of the paralytic and the Sabbath controversy, differ from that of the religious leaders?
10. How does Mark's Gospel often present controversies, and what is a recurring theme in the controversies discussed in Mark chapter 2?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The question posed to Jesus was why John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees were fasting, but his disciples were not. This highlighted a perceived difference in religious practice between Jesus' followers and other respected religious groups.

2. The "sons of the bridal chamber" are the close attendants or companions of the bridegroom, metaphorically representing Jesus' disciples. Fasting is inappropriate in their presence because it is a time of joy and celebration, akin to a wedding feast.
3. These parables illustrate that the new reality brought by Jesus is fundamentally different and cannot be simply integrated into old, established systems or traditions. The potency of the new will inevitably clash and damage the old.
4. Jesus' disciples were picking heads of grain as they walked through the fields on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees considered a form of reaping and thus unlawful work on the Sabbath. The issue was the perceived violation of Sabbath regulations regarding labor.
5. Jesus referenced the story of David and his companions in 1 Samuel 21, where they ate the consecrated bread in the house of God because they were hungry and in need. This precedent suggested that human need could sometimes supersede ritualistic practices.
6. Jesus stated that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," emphasizing that the Sabbath's purpose was to serve humanity's needs for rest and well-being, rather than humans existing solely to observe the Sabbath.
7. Jesus declares himself to be Lord even of the Sabbath. This statement asserts his authority over the Sabbath regulations and his understanding of its true purpose and intent.
8. The title "Son of Man," drawing from Daniel 7, is a high Christological title signifying authority and even divine association. In the context of Mark 2:28, it underscores Jesus' claim to have the authority to interpret and even supersede Sabbath laws because he is the Lord of the Sabbath.
9. Jesus' authority moved beyond simply interpreting scripture or tradition; he declared the intent of divine institutions like the Sabbath and demonstrated the power to forgive sins. This suggested a divine identity and a level of authority that the religious leaders did not possess.
10. Mark often presents controversies in a stacked manner, one after another, showing a growing tension and conflict. A recurring theme in the controversies discussed in Mark chapter 2 is issues related to food and eating, often intersecting with questions of religious law and tradition.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the fasting controversy (Mark 2:18-22) in revealing the nature of Jesus' ministry and his relationship with established religious practices. Consider the metaphors Jesus employs and the implications of his statements.
2. Discuss the Sabbath controversy in Mark 2:23-28. How does Jesus use scripture and his own authority to respond to the Pharisees' accusations? What does this episode reveal about his understanding of the Law?
3. Compare and contrast the two controversies presented in Mark 2:18-28. What common themes or underlying issues connect these episodes, and how do they contribute to the developing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders?
4. Explore the implications of Jesus' self-identification as the "bridegroom" in the context of the fasting controversy and as "Lord even of the Sabbath" in the context of the Sabbath controversy. What do these titles suggest about his identity and authority?
5. Evaluate the role of controversy in Mark's Gospel as illustrated in Mark chapter 2. Why might Mark have chosen to present Jesus' public ministry through a series of escalating conflicts? What does this narrative strategy achieve?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Bridegroom (in context):** A metaphorical representation of Jesus, drawing on Old Testament imagery of God as the bridegroom of Israel. His presence signifies a time of joy and celebration.
- **Sons of the bridal chamber:** The close companions or attendants of the bridegroom, used metaphorically to refer to Jesus' disciples during his earthly ministry.
- **Fasting:** The practice of abstaining from food for a specific period, often for religious reasons such as devotion, repentance, or mourning.
- **Unshrunk cloth:** New fabric that has not been pre-washed and will shrink when washed, potentially tearing an old garment it is sewn onto.
- **Old garment:** In the parable, represents established traditions and practices that are rigid and cannot easily accommodate something new.

- **New wine:** In the parable, symbolizes the fresh and potent teachings and the new era inaugurated by Jesus' ministry.
- **Old wineskins:** Leather bags used to store wine, which would become brittle and inelastic with age, making them unsuitable for holding fermenting new wine.
- **Sabbath:** The seventh day of the week, observed by Jews as a day of rest and worship, based on the creation narrative in Genesis and commanded in the Ten Commandments.
- **Gleaning:** The act of collecting leftover grain from fields after the main harvest, which was permitted for the poor and strangers according to Deuteronomy 23:25.
- **Reaping:** Cutting and gathering mature grain, which was considered a form of work prohibited on the Sabbath according to interpretations of Exodus 34:21 and the Mishnah.
- **Consecrated bread (showbread):** Twelve loaves of bread that were baked weekly and placed in the sanctuary of the Temple as an offering to God; typically only priests were allowed to eat it (Leviticus 24:5-9).
- **Abiathar:** A high priest during the reign of King David, although the specific event Jesus refers to occurred during the time of Ahimelech, Abiathar's father. The lecture suggests "in the days of Abiathar" could refer to the broader period when Abiathar was a dominant figure.
- **Ahimelech:** The high priest who provided bread for David and his men when they were fleeing from Saul (1 Samuel 21).
- **Haggadah:** A Jewish literary tradition that interprets biblical texts through storytelling, anecdotes, and legal discussions, often used in rabbinic argumentation.
- **Son of Man:** A title Jesus frequently used for himself, drawing from both its general meaning as a human being and its specific Christological significance from Daniel 7, where it refers to a Messianic figure with divine authority and glory.
- **Christological title:** A title that relates to the identity and nature of Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

5. FAQs on Jennings, Mark, Session 5, Fasting and the Sabbath (Mark 2:18-28), Biblicalearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Mark 2:18-28

1. Why were John's disciples and the Pharisees fasting, but Jesus' disciples were not?

Jesus explains this by using the analogy of a wedding. He compares himself to the bridegroom and his disciples to the "sons of the bridegroom" or attendants. Just as it would be inappropriate for the groom's close companions to fast during the joyous celebration of a wedding while the groom is present, it is similarly incongruous for his disciples to fast while he, the bringer of the new covenant and messianic joy, is with them. His presence marks a time of celebration, not mourning or deprivation that fasting signifies.

2. What is the significance of Jesus' statement that "the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast"? This statement serves as a foreshadowing of Jesus' impending arrest, death, and burial. While his current presence is a cause for joy akin to a wedding feast, his absence due to being "taken away" will bring a time of sorrow and yearning for his disciples, akin to the reasons for fasting. This hints at the temporary nature of his physical presence and the future grief his followers will experience.

3. What is the meaning behind Jesus' parables of the unshrunk cloth on an old garment and new wine in old wineskins? These parables illustrate the incompatibility of Jesus' new teachings and the new era he is ushering in with the rigid and outdated traditions of the old religious system. Just as a new patch of unshrunk cloth will tear away from an old garment, and new, fermenting wine will burst old, inflexible wineskins, Jesus' new message and the freedom it offers cannot be contained or properly integrated into the existing framework of legalistic interpretations and practices. A completely new approach and understanding are required.

4. What was the controversy surrounding Jesus' disciples picking grain on the Sabbath?

The controversy arose because the Pharisees considered the disciples' actions of picking and eating heads of grain while walking through a field on the Sabbath to be a form of "reaping," which was prohibited as work under their interpretation of Sabbath laws. While the Torah allowed the poor and travelers to pluck grain to eat, the Pharisees' oral traditions had expanded the definition of work to include such activities.

5. How does Jesus defend his disciples' actions on the Sabbath by referencing David eating the consecrated bread? Jesus defends his disciples by citing the biblical account of David and his hungry companions eating the consecrated bread from the house of God, which was normally reserved only for priests. Jesus' argument implies that human need and well-being can, in certain circumstances, take precedence over ritualistic observances. Just as David's hunger justified an exception to the Temple law, the disciples' hunger justified their actions on the Sabbath according to Jesus' logic.

6. What is the significance of Jesus' statement, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"? This is a pivotal statement where Jesus declares the true purpose and intent of the Sabbath. He asserts that the Sabbath was established by God as a gift for humanity, intended to provide rest, restoration, and an opportunity for worship. It was meant to serve human needs and well-being. The Pharisees, in Jesus' view, had perverted this purpose by creating a complex web of restrictive rules that turned the Sabbath into a burden rather than a blessing, prioritizing the observance of their traditions over human needs.

7. What does Jesus mean when he declares, "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"? By calling himself the "Son of Man" and claiming lordship over the Sabbath, Jesus is making a profound statement about his identity and authority. Drawing potentially from the messianic figure in Daniel 7, "Son of Man" is a title Jesus often used to refer to himself, signifying his divine authority and role. His lordship over the Sabbath implies that as the one who instituted it (or at least understands its ultimate purpose), he has the authority to interpret and even supersede traditional understandings of its observance. This elevates his authority beyond that of human interpreters of the law.

8. How do these controversies in Mark 2 highlight the nature of Jesus' authority and lead to increasing conflict with religious leaders? These controversies collectively demonstrate a shift in the nature of authority. Jesus' authority is not based on rabbinic interpretation or tradition, but on his own divine identity and understanding of God's will and purpose. He demonstrates authority to forgive sins, to call seemingly unworthy individuals, to redefine religious practices like fasting, and to declare the true meaning of foundational institutions like the Sabbath. This direct exercise of divine authority, challenging the established interpretations and power structures of the religious leaders, inevitably leads to escalating tension and conflict as they question his claims and his challenge to their authority.