

Miracle Healing On Sabbath: An Exegesis Of Mark 3:1-6

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Abstract

The Sabbath, a cornerstone of biblical theology, embodies God's creation, sanctification, and covenant with humanity. Over time, its observance became heavily burdened with legalistic stipulations, especially during the intertestamental period. These additions distorted its purpose, culminating in tensions between Jesus and Jewish leaders, particularly the Pharisees. Mark 3:1–6 portrays a critical confrontation where Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, challenging rigid interpretations while emphasizing the day's restorative essence. Scholarly discourse reflects diverse views on this episode. Some propose that Jesus redefined the Sabbath by prioritizing humanitarian acts, while others interpret it as a confrontation against Pharisaic legalism. Prior studies lack an in-depth exploration of Mark 3:1–6 within its historical and grammatical context. This study bridges these gaps by examining Mark 3:1–6 through a historical-grammatical lens, exploring its theological implications. It hypothesizes that Jesus' Sabbath healing reaffirms the day's divine intent as one of restoration and salvation, countering the prevailing legalism and redefining its role in the covenantal relationship.

Keywords: *Sabbath, miracle, healing, Pharisees, Herodians*

Introduction

Sabbath is one of the significant words in the New Testament, because the word *σάββατον* occurs 11 times out of 673 verses of Mark, the most significant among the NT writings. They are 9 out of 1068 verses in Matthew, 19 out of 1149 in Luke, 11 out of 878 in John, 10 out of 1002 in Acts, 1 out of 437 in Corinthians and 1 out of 95 in Colossians.¹ Based on that, it could be seen that the highest percentage of occurrences is in Mark, and it means that the issue of the Sabbath is essential in the NT, particularly in the Gospel of Mark. On the other hand, miracle healing is important as well, particularly regarding the ministry of Christ in the world². Ladd connected the miracle healing with the Messianic salvation of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven to save people from their diseases.³ There are certain miracle healings that performed by Jesus Christ that was recorded by Mark in his Gospel, and some of them were performed on Sabbath.⁴

¹ Word Search “*σάββατον*”, Bible Works 9 Program

² D. A. Carson & Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 77. They argued that the miracle healing of Jesus Christ becomes the main focus of the Synoptic Gospel.

³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Revised Edition, Edited by Donald A. Hagner, (Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1993), 74.

⁴ They are Mark 1:21-28 that parallel with Luke 4:31-37; Matthew 12:8-14; Mark 3:1-6 parallel with Luke 6: 6-11; Mark 6:1-6a parallel with Matthew 13:54-58 parallel with Luke 4:16-30, Luke 13:10-17 and Luke 14:1-6. consult David Odhiambo, *Jesus' Healing on Sabbath in Luke: An Exegetical Study of Luke 14:1-6*, Thesis Equivalent, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite Phillipines, 3.

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The narrative in Mark 3:1-6 portrays Jesus performed the miracle that involves the confrontation with the Pharisees and this confrontation is intentional. The author portrays Jesus entered the synagogue on Sabbath, and there was a man with a shriveled hand. Some of people there watched him closely in order to find reason to blame him if he would heal the man on Sabbath. Jesus, however, called the man into the midst, and asked the people a rhetorical question about what action that is lawful on Sabbath. While they were silent, Jesus healed the hand of the man. At the end of the story, there was a council between Pharisees and Herodians to in order to kill Jesus.

There is a scholarly discussion about the passage of Mark 3 when Jesus healed on the Sabbath day. Some commentators proposed that Jesus affirmed the noble work on the first day of the week,⁵ while some refers to the abrogation of the Seventh day Sabbath,⁶ and lessen the meaning of special day on Sabbath.⁷ Another scholar, Park, tried to discuss the issue of confrontation in Mark 2:1-3:6 relating the theory of cognitive science, however, he is not focusing the issue of Sabbath healing.⁸ Therefore, there should be a research to fill this scholarly gap, and this is the intention of this paper.

Methodology

This article tries to examine the theological implication of healing on Sabbath in particular passage of Mark 3:1-6. It will be examined from the perspective of historical grammatical method of interpretation.⁹ It will trace the history of the Sabbath, the socio-cultural history of synagogue, Pharisees and Herodians, lexical analysis of certain words, structural syntactical analysis and the contextual analysis.

Discussion

In order to get clearer understanding, this paper will discuss about the history of the Sabbath from the creation, OT, and intertestamental periode. Furthermore, it will analyze socio cultural background of synagogue as a place of worship and two parties that involved in

⁵ For more discussion, consult Charles Ryle, *Expository Thought on the gospel: St. Mark*, (Greenwood, SC: The Altic Press, 1973), 45. He argued that “it is plain, from these words of our Lord, that no Christian need ever hesitate to do a realy good work on the Sunday”.

⁶ D. A. Carson, ed., “Jesus and Sabbath in the Four Gospels,” in *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 14-16.

⁷ Leslie J. Francis, *Personality Type and Scripture: Exploring Mark's Gospel*, (London, UK: Mowbray, 1997), 49. He stated that “The Pharisees were running a campaign to keep the Sabbath special. Jesus fell foul of the way they thought the Sabbath should really be kept. Their campaign to keep the Sabbath special required people to desist from plucking corn. Their campaign to keep the Sabbath special required people to desist from nonemergency healings.”

⁸ Yoon Man Park, *Mark's Memory Resources and the Controversy Stories (Mark 2.1-3.6): an Application of the Frame Theory of Cognitive Science (Cognitive Linguistics and Psychology) to Markan Oral-Aural Narrative*, Doctor of Theology Thesis, Trinity College and the Biblical Department of the Toronto School of Theology, Toronto 2008. In his research, he tried to prove that “frame theory is the model that can best account for the hearer's cognitive processing and understanding of how Mark's oral-aural narrative, particularly 2.1-3.6, is told”. In his research, he did not stress about the issue of Sabbath its historical background, furthermore, he did not examine the relation between the Sabbath and the synagogue.

⁹ Ekkehardt Mueller, “Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* Edited by George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 111. This method holds presupposition that the Scripture is the authoritative Word of God: The Bible alone is the final and the highest test of truth, the totality of the scripture, the harmony of the scripture, and spiritual things must be discerned spiritually

the narrative, that are Pharisees and Herodians. It also will analyze two significant Greek words of θεραπεύω and ἔξιμι in lexical analysis. Furthermore, it will analyze some syntactical elements as well as the structure of the text. Lastly, It will analyze the context of the narrative, both immediate and broader context.

History of the Sabbath

Sabbath is the major issue in the narrative of healing the man with a withered hand, because it occurs twice in six verses of the passage. The first occurrence in 3:2 explains the reason of accusation of the opponents, when they were looking reason if Jesus would healed him on Sabbath. Furthermore, the second occurrence in 3:4 occurs when Jesus asked rhetorical question about the thing that lawful on Sabbath. It is necessary to trace the origin and history of Sabbath from the Old Testament, inter-testament, and the New Testament in relation to the miracle healing of Jesus.

The origin of the Sabbath could be traced from the very beginning of the Scripture, in the “Pentateuch.”¹⁰ According to the account of Genesis, it was after the six days of creation then God “rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen 2:2-3). These actions implied command to observe the seventh day Sabbath as a day of worship.¹¹ Based on the Hebrew semantic, there is a three-fold essence on the Sabbath, which are rest, blessings, and holiness.¹² Furthermore, Fray argued that the essence of Sabbath shows the wholeness of the foundation of creation.¹³

In the book of Exodus, the first occurrence of Sabbath related with manna that God gave to Israelite after their exodus from Egypt (Exod. 16:1-36). The purpose of the Sabbath in this occasion was not only to feed the nation, but also to educate them to observe the commandment of God regarding the day of rest and worship.¹⁴ When the Israelite arrived at Sinai, the Sabbath was given to them as law in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:8-11). Hasel pointed out five meanings of the fourth commandment of Sabbath:

The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy means (1) to accept God’s gift for man, (2) to follow the divine Exemplar’s pattern, (3) to acknowledge Him as creator, and (4) to participate in God’s rest. It also means a cessation from activity of the work that man is engaged in during the six days appointed for such work.¹⁵

The essence of Sabbath as law also parallel with the account in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 with emphasize to the personal response of deliverance from the slavery.¹⁶ Furthermore, Fray connected the Sabbath in Exod. 31:12-17 and in Exod 35:1-3 with the sanctuary as the sign of sanctification and everlasting covenant.¹⁷ Beside the good things that was discussed previously, however, emphasize is given in both passages that those who transgress the

¹⁰ Pentateuch is a term that means “a book in five parts”. It designates to the first five books in the Old Testament, they are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. For further discussion, consult Terence E. Fretheim, *The Pentateuch*, Edited by Gene M. Tucker, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 19.

¹¹ For further discussion, consult Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 22-23.

¹² Hasel, 24-25.

¹³ Mathilde Fray, *The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: An Exegetical and Theological Study*, PhD Dissertation, Andrews university, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2011. 57-61.

¹⁴ Hasel, 26-27.

¹⁵ Ibid. 30.

¹⁶ Fray, 169-170.

¹⁷ Ibid. 193-253.

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holiness of the Sabbath day would be put to death. The importance of the Sabbath is strongly emphasized in the Pentateuch because of the death penalty for those who transgress it and doing work on that day (Exod. 34:21; 23 :12; 31 :12-17; 35 :1-3; Lev. 23:1-3).

The essence of Sabbath continued along with the period of kingdom of Israel and Exile and was recorded by certain prophets. Prophet Isaiah reminded the things that must and must not to do, (Isa. 58:13-14) emphasizing to the holiness of the Sabbath. This passage proposed the prohibitions for the “the ideal of Sabbath observance”¹⁸ to the people of God. Furthermore, Isaiah also proposed the essence of Sabbath in relation with the new heaven and the new earth (Isa 58:22-23) as the eschatological view regarding judgment and salvation.¹⁹ Prophet Ezekiel also pointed out the Sabbath as the sign of belonging between God as the creator and his creation (Ezek. 20:12, 20).²⁰ Moreover, this passage also reinforces the everlasting covenant between God and His people;²¹ “I the LORD made them holy”.

The essence of Sabbath continued in the period of inter-testament after the Israelite returned from the Exile. There are some extra-biblical sources that recorded the issue of Sabbath. The first report could be found in the book of Judith 8:6 that recorded her fasting, except on the Sabbath day.²² This book that dated around 150 and 125 B.C confirmed the essence of the Sabbath in the period of Inter-Testament.²³ Another document could be found in the book of Jubilees contains a number of prohibitions.²⁴

Even though the The observance of Sabbath continued in the intertestamental period, however, the spiritual leaders changed the essence of the worship. The added heavy requirements to the law of Sabbath that was introduced by God through Prophets in the OT.²⁵ These regulations developed into Mishnah and institutionalized as legal law that need to be obeyed.²⁶

¹⁸ Gerhard F. Hasel and W. G. C. Murdoch, “The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Edited by Kenneth A. Strand, (Washington, DC, Review and Herald, 1982), 47, 48. They pointed out three important essences regarding the observance of Sabbath, they are: 1. Refusing to engage in one’s own business (affairs) on the Sabbath. 2. Not doing one’s own ways. 3. Refraining from speaking words on the Sabbath.

¹⁹ Ibid., 49.

²⁰ Ibid., 50. The prophet emphasize the term “my sabbaths” pointing out to the Lord’s Sabbath as the sign of possession. Furthermore, it word “sanctify” reminds God’s people about the creation in Gen 2:1-2 about God is the creator, and the man as His creation.

²¹ Ibid. 51.

²² “And she fasted all the days of her widowhood, save the eves of the Sabbaths, and the Sabbaths, and the eves of the new moons, and the new moons and the feasts and solemn days of the house of Israel.” Judith 8:6 (KJA)

²³ Sakae Kubo, “The Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, Edited by Kenneth A. Strand, (Washington, DC, Review and Herald, 1982), 58.

²⁴ Kubo, 58. “The Book of Jubilees, writing in the form of a revelation given to Moses on Sinai, is dated about the same time as Judith. Here for the first time we have a series of prohibitions regarding the Sabbath, and a forerunner of the later Rabbinic laws regarding the Sabbath. Fragment of this book have also been found at Qumran and are believed to be a part of the literature of the sect that lived there.”

²⁵ Wilfred Stott, “Sabbath, the Lord’s day” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Volume 3, Edited by Colin Brown, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 407. He proposed that (“Palestinian Judaism tended toward a more literal and rigid attitude. In order to safeguard its observance, a ‘hedge’ came to be set round the commandment. Traditions of how it was to be observed began to crystallize. To protect it from loose Gentile influences, a stereotyped code of what could or could not be done on the Sabbath came into existence.”

²⁶ Ibid., 408. “The traditions, later incorporated into the Mishnah, became codified. The first tractate of the second division of the Mishnah is devoted to the Sabbath. In Shabbath 7:2 the main classes of work forbidden on the Sabbath are given as ‘forty save one’. However, under certain circumstances, the Sabbath law could be superseded. These included the service of the priests in the temple, the saving of life in emergency and circumcision on the eight day.”

The issue of Sabbath continued in the NT period related with Jesus and the Apostles. The Greek word *σάββατον* in the NT derived from the Hebrew word *sabbat* that semantically means “to cease, to pause.”²⁷ Another meanings are “week” and “Sabbaths, or time of sacred rest.”²⁸ It is the continuation of the Old Testament concept to stop from daily work for sacred worship to God, however, the strict and heavy observance still inherited from the period of intertestament.

The Gospels portrait Sabbath as one of the major issue of controversy between Jesus and his opponents. Jesus himself confirmed the authenticity of the Sabbath. Luke showed that it was the custom of Jesus to enter the synagogue on Sabbath to read from the Scripture (Luke 4:16). Furthermore, the same idea was followed by the Apostle Paul in his ministry journey when he entered the synagogue on Sabbath and read from the scripture. (Acts 13:14)

Socio-Cultural Background

It is necessary to trace the setting of this narrative happened, in order to know the confrontation better. This episode happened on Sabbath in the synagogue, and it involved the Pharisees and Herodians in confrontation with Jesus. The word synagogue derived from the Greek word *συναγωγή* that means “synagogue, assembly.”²⁹ This word represents the meeting or assembly. “a Collecting, a gathering; a Christian assembly or congregation, the congregation of a synagogue,.. Hence the place itself, a synagogue.”³⁰ This term could refer to the essence of gathering and the physical building of synagogue.

The synagogue not merely a building, but a Jewish custom to gather together for worship and other religious activities. It was originated from the captivity, when the Jews separated from the worship and fellowship of the Temple and they tried to create atmosphere like in Jerusalem. They gathered together among themselves for praying, reading and practice the Scripture in the small group, then the practice continued throughout the period of Inter-testament and New Testament.³¹

This is talking about the Jewish culture then it developed to the physical building of synagogue, the center of Jewish community, the place of gathering, the place of study the torah, the place of worship, the place of teaching, and other activities, which Powell argued it like “local senate or university”.³² It scattered around the ancient world, where the Jews made it as the representative of the temple in Jerusalem. There is evidence that this gathering happened on the Sabbath day when the Jews and Pharisees read from the Scripture.³³

There are many occasions in the account of Gospel that recorded about synagogue. It became the place of Jesus for teaching on Sabbath, performed miracle (Mark 6:2) and other

²⁷ *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vols. 3, Edited by Collin Browns, (Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 1978), 405.

²⁸ *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* Edited by Wesley J. Perschbacher, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 364.

²⁹ Ted Hildebrandt, *Greek-English Lexicon*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 503.

³⁰ *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 388.

³¹ William A. Simmons, *Peoples of the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 24.

³² Ivor Powell, *Mark's Superb Gospel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel), 76. “These facts enabled us to understand that the synagogue had become the local senate or university. The leaders of every community could be found there, and all matters of serious religious jurisprudence were handled within the building. Each leader was committed to the preservation of the laws of God and Moses, and the worst charge which could be made against any man was that of blasphemy. If he were found guilty of that offense, the punishment was death by stonning.

³³ Kubo, 66.

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activities. It became the place for the apostle Paul for preaching about the Good News, it was also the place that he visited for the first time in his missionary journey (Acts 13:4).

In the narrative of healing the withered man, there is an article appears there together with the noun (τὴν συναγωγὴν). The occurrence of the article emphasized the definiteness of the synagogue that took place.³⁴ It happened on the definite synagogue, because of the appearance of definite article together with the noun. It most probably refers to the definite synagogue that was recorded in previous chapters, which is the synagogue in Capernaum (1:21).³⁵ It was the place when Jesus drove out an impure spirit from a man.

Pharisee is one of the significant characters in the story of Sabbath healing. The account of Mark records the word “Pharisees” in verse 6 when they went out and made council with Herodians that Jesus might die. Although the Pharisees only occur once, however the personal pronoun in previous verses could refer to them. They watched closely if Jesus would heal the man with withered hand on Sabbath day in order to find reason to accuse Jesus (verse 2), then Jesus asked them rhetorical question that they could not answer (verse 4). After Jesus healed the hand of the man (verse 5), they went out and did the plot to kill Jesus.

The Pharisees are the antagonist characters in the Gospel of Mark together with other Jewish leaders.³⁶ They involved confrontation with Jesus regarding certain issues like eating with sinners (2:16 together with scribes), fasting (2:18), the observance of the Sabbath (2:24), the healing on Sabbath (3:2 together with Herodians), divorce (10:2), hand washing (7:1 together with Scribes), miracle and authority of Jesus (8:11) and about the tax to Roman empire (12:12 together with Herodians).³⁷ This confrontation most probably caused by the willingness of the Pharisees to gain control and influence over the people, since they are spiritual leaders in Galilee.³⁸ Josephus recorded the profile of Pharisees:

“That the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason the Sadducees reject them, and say, that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. And concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have risen among them, while the Sadducees are

³⁴William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*, 2nd Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 38-39. “As in English, the Greek article is translated ‘the’. The general rule is to translate according to the presence or absence of the article.” Furthermore, Porter and friends point out several functions of Greek article mainly to point out the definiteness, and other usages. For more information, consult Stanley E. Porter, Jeffrey T. Reed and Matthew Brook O’Donnell, *Fundamentals of New Testament Greek*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 30-31.

³⁵Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio Rhetorical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 133.

³⁶Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, and Livonia, MI: Dove Booksellers, 2001), 146. He recorded that “the pharisees along with the Scribes are the chief opponents of Jesus in Galilee; the chief priests, scribes and elders are his opponents in Jerusalem at the time of his death.”

³⁷Saldarini., 149.

³⁸Ibid., 150-151. “The Pharisees were recognized leaders in the Galilean community, according to Mark. This means that they had high standing in the community and influence, if not power, with the people and other leaders of the community. Jesus, who was from a lower class artisan family, did not have the social standing, honor and influence to command respect as a teacher, as his return to Nazareth shows (6:2-3). Those who knew him dismissed him as a local carpenter without any community recognition of wisdom or power. His family is an ordinary one and his new claim to teach and to a special standing in the community is rejected out of hand.”

able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side.”³⁹

It denotes the representatives of an influential religious group in Judaism. Probably they originated in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah who performed the reforms concerning the observance of Jewish festivals, tithing and purity.⁴⁰ They separated themselves from ordinary people who contaminated with the paganism and apostasy, and they emphasized the strict observance of the law.⁴¹

Another significant character that was recorded in the story of healing is the Herodians. The word Herodians derived from the Greek word Ἡροδianoί that means “Herodians as Jewish sect.”⁴² Jewish historian, Josephus recorded about this group as “the ones thinking like Herod.”⁴³ They were the ally of Herodian dynasty and specifically Herod Antipas that held the position to the Roman Government side.⁴⁴ This group consisted of “Herodian family members, supporters, administrators, and civic elites.”⁴⁵

Racially Herod and the Herodians were not Jews, but they came from Herodians came from hasmonean dynasty⁴⁶. From the perspective of religious, they were proselytes to Judaism and at times sought to strengthen their bond with the Jews through carefully planned marriages to prominent Jewish families.⁴⁷

In the account of the New Testament, this group was recorded two times in Mark (3:6 and 12:13) and one time in Matthew (22:16). In all occurrences, they always involved confrontation with Jesus together with the Pharisees regarding certain things. Only Mark who recorded the confrontation episode of healing on Sabbath and connected with the Pharisees Herodians. The result of this controversy was the walk-out movement and the plot to kill Him. Another confrontation narrative was portrayed by both Matthew and Mark regarding the imperial tax to Caesar. The Herodians together with the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus regarding the question, is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not. Jesus answered them with the question about whose image in the coin of a denarius, and then Jesus stated “give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” This answer caused them amazed at Jesus and they left him.

Based on those confrontations, it could be seen the alliance of Pharisees and Herodians is the unity of religious and political power. Their confrontation with Jesus also related with the issue of theology and politics. In one occasion, they tried to blame Jesus with the theological issue of Sabbath and another occasion they tried to trap Him regarding political issue of tax.

³⁹ Josephus Flavius, *Antiquities*, 13, 10, 6

⁴⁰ For further study, see Simmons, 54-57.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Edited by Geoffrey W. H. Lampe (Oxford, UK Oxford University Press, 1976), 645.

⁴³ Josephus Flavius, *Jewish War*. 1.319.

⁴⁴ John Painter, *Mark’s Gospel*, New Testament Readings, Edited by John Court, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 37.

⁴⁵ Mark A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee: The Population of Galilee and New Testament Studies*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 28.

⁴⁶ Chancey, 180.

⁴⁷ Simmons, 204.

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Lexical Analysis

One of the keywords in this passage is about heal that occurs in verse 2, that occurs to portrait when the opponents watch closely if Jesus would heal the man. Although the word only occurs once, but the whole passage is talking about the healing itself; healing the man with a withered hand that was healed by Jesus. This word derived from Greek verb θεραπεύω which occurs in future tense with

The word θεραπεύω lexically means “to heal, cure.”⁴⁸ Some lexicon tried to give deeper nuances “to serve, minister to, render service and attendance; to render divine service, worship.”⁴⁹ Another classical lexicon related this word with paganism, “do service to the gods”⁵⁰ In other hand, it also semantically related to the restoration of health that means “apply a remedy to, met the soul, the treating gently, consoling and mitigating.”⁵¹ Even though it could be translated in both way “heal, serve”⁵², but in the context of Mark 3, this word is better translated from the perspective of healing and cure. This word portraits the ministry of Jesus who healed the man with a withered hand.

In the Synoptic Gospel, this word mostly describes the action of Jesus to heal the diseases and weakness of people, and sometimes it refers to the action of Jesus’ disciples. Ladd pointed out the requirement of the miracle healing of Jesus which are faith and believe in order to receive the remedy⁵³. Furthermore, it also related with the authority of Jesus Christ as Heavenly Judge to forgive sins.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Odhiambo assert the idea of salvation in the miracle action of Jesus Christ; to save the soul of the person together with healing his physical sickness.⁵⁵

There is a close relation between physical healing and theology of salvation. These meaning would suggest that when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, He restored his being wholly for physical, spiritual and social healing. This is the complete restoration for the sick man because he saved his soul, restored his social status and he healed the physical of the man from illness and sick.

Another key-word in this passage is “lawful”, which derived from Greek verb Εξεστιν. This word could be found in the center of the structure in the narrative of healing on Sabbath.⁵⁶ The word occurred as present active indicative of ἔξιμι for 3rd person singular. Lexically, the word Εξεστι means “it is allowed, is possible,”⁵⁷ it could also means “it is permitted.”⁵⁸

The issue of the things that permissible on the Sabbath is significant in the disagreement between Jesus and the Pharisees because it related with the previous story

⁴⁸ *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵⁰ For further discussion of semantic meaning based on ancient Greek literatures, consult *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, (New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1996), 793.

⁵¹ *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 645.

⁵² Hildebrandt, 477.

⁵³ Ladd, 75, 306.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 76, 77.

⁵⁵ Odhiambo, 66. He pointed out the restoration and emphasized the redemptive purpose in the episode of Sabbath healing in the account of Gospel.

⁵⁶ The structure of the passage will be discussed in the sub heading “Structure”, it is together with the chiastic and the center as the main point of the structure.

⁵⁷ *A Greek-English Lexicon*,

⁵⁸ Robert E. Van Voorst, *Building Your New Testament Greek Vocabulary*, (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1990), 14.

regarding the issue of Sabbath.⁵⁹ This confrontation related with the additional laws that was added by the Jewish leaders after the exile. The debate about what is lawful on Sabbath was about the things that could danger a person's life, it could be allowed; if in emergency situation that could cause the man die, an action could be done by do work or heal the man. In the eyes of the Pharisees the situation of the sick man was not dangerous for his life, so the healing, so the action could be seen as unlawful.⁶⁰ On the other hand, murder obviously transgression on the Sabbath covenant, since it against the sixth commandment of the decalogue.

Structural-Syntactical Analysis

The miracle healing on Sabbath was designed carefully and composed in a nice structure. The story started when Jesus entered into the synagogue and ended when Jesus departed from there to the lake of Galilee. After Jesus entered, the opponents watch closely if Jesus would cure the man, so they can blame Him; it is parallel when the Pharisees made council with the Herodians to kill Jesus at the end of the story. The command of Jesus to the man to stand up in the midst before asking rhetorical question is parallel to the command to him to straight out his hand after the question. Furthermore, Jesus asked the opponents parallel with their silent. At the center of the narrative is the rhetorical question regarding what is lawful on the Sabbath day. The structure of the passage could be seen as a chiasmic structure like below:

- A. Jesus entered into the synagogue; there was a man with shriveled hand (v. 1)
- B. Pharisees watch closely if He would healed him (v. 2)
- C. Jesus said to the man "stand up in the midst" (v. 3)
- D. Jesus Asked them (v. 4)
- X. "Which is lawful on the Sabbath do good or do evil, to safe life or kill" (v. 4)
- D'. But they were silent (v. 4)
- C'. Jesus said to the man "stretch out your hand". His hand was restored (v. 5)
 Looking up with anger [ptc]
- B'. Pharisees made council with Herodians to kill Jesus (v. 6) going out [ptc]
- A'. Jesus departed with his disciples to the lake (v. 7) Out of story

The center of the passage (X) is the main idea of this passage and it is the intention that would emphasized by the author regarding the miracle healing of Jesus. It is a rhetorical question of Jesus Christ for people who were watching him, "which is lawful on the Sabbath: do good or do evil, save life or kill?"

Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill; This question is very tricky for the Pharisees. If they answer in negative way, they will be blamed

⁵⁹ The word Εξεστν also occurs in the previous confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees when the Pharisees complained because the disciples plucking up grains on Sabbath. They blamed the disciples because according to them, the disciples did something that unlawful on Sabbath day. The exact same word was used in both occasion. For more discussion, consult Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 150.

⁶⁰ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, Edited by C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119-120. "According to the Rabbis the sick or injured were to be treated on the Sabbath day, if life was actually in danger (cf. (M) Tom. viii. 6: 'Whenever there is doubt whether life is in danger this overrides the Sabbath5); but if there was no danger to life, then treatment was not permissible. (For illustrative material see S.-B. 1, pp. 623-9.) Since the withered hand did not constitute a danger to the man's life, to heal it on the Sabbath would be in the Pharisees' view an infringement of the Sabbath and punishable as such."

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because the murder is obviously unlawful and transgress the sixth command in Decalogue. Furthermore there is no prohibition in the Mishnah to do well and it is unlawful to do negative way on Sabbath both kill and to do evil. On the other hand, if they answer in positive way, it means that they allowed Jesus to good and to save the man's life and perform the miracle healing to him.

This is not merely a question, but also a statement of teaching, because rhetorical question often used to emphasize important idea. The essence is clear: it is lawful to do good things and to save life on the Sabbath day. This idea confirmed the essence of Salvation in the Sabbath day based on the OT concept. Furthermore, it supported Jesus previous teaching about the Sabbath that was made for human beings.

There are some contrasts in this episode of healing on Sabbath, mostly about the Pharisees. The Pharisees are those separated ones, and they supposed to keep the law of Sabbath, however, they broke the regulation on Sabbath by planning a murder together with the Herodians. This contrast according to Hoggatt could be seen as "irony."⁶¹ Furthermore, there is a contrast between the hand of the man and the heart of the Pharisees. In one side, the hand of the man that previously withered was healed by Jesus. This condition means the inability of the man to do physical works and activities that was restored by Jesus. On the other side, after Jesus asked the question, the heart of the opponents was hardened. This condition represented the degradation of moral values of the opponents.⁶²

The last contrast could be seen in the question of Jesus, "which is lawful on Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" This question revealed the "illegality and the senselessness of the authorities' collusion against Jesus."⁶³ This question occurs in the contrasting senses, which is good and evil, and save life and kill. This question actually showed the contrast endings between Jesus and the opponents. In one side, Jesus saved the life of the man by healing his hand, which was the symbol of power. On the other hand, the opponents made plot to kill Jesus that obviously unlawfull.

It is necessary to discuss the first phrase in this passage about the adverb that explains the action of Jesus when he entered the Synagogue on Sabbath day, because it related with immediate context and broader context of the passage. Καὶ εἰσῆλθεν **πάλιν** εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν. The word **πάλιν** serves as adverb adjective that means "again." This adverb implied the repetition of action of Jesus,⁶⁴ this was not the first time Jesus enter the synagogue on Sabbath day. There are two possibilities to explain this adverb, which are specific or general.

The first way is to see the passage in 3:1-6 from the perspective antecedent verse in 1:21 that explain about previous miracle healing.⁶⁵ This passage portraits another miracle healing when Jesus drove out an impure spirit in Capernaum. There are two hints that relate both stories, which are synagogue and Sabbath. It was the Sabbath when Jesus went into the

Jerry Camery Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext*, (Cambridge, UK: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1992), 118. "They break the spirit of the law to prevent Jesus fro breaking into letter. Their subsequent collusion with the Herodians makes that irony especially poignant: it is on the Sabbath that they hand down the decision that Jesus must be destroyed."

⁶² For more discussion, consult James Morison, *A Practical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publisher, 1981), 68. He proposed that "the heart or mind, it denotes the moral inseblity which is the prominent characteristic of religious formalists and bigots."

⁶³ Hoggatt, 48.

⁶⁴ Rodney J. Decker, *Temporal Deixis of the Greek Verb in the Gospel of Mark with Reference to Verbal Aspect*, Studies in Biblical Greek Vol. 10, edited by D. A. Carson, (New York: NY, Peter Lang, 2001) , 70-71. At the most basic level, , "simply expresses repetition and means again, or a second time."

⁶⁵ Cranfield, 119. He proposed two action in 1:21 and 2:1-3, however, the second miracle healing is less connected to the issue of Sabbath, because the author did not mention about Sabbath and Synagogue.

synagogue and taught there. He healed the man and the people were amazed and this news spread quickly in the region of Galilee (1:21-28). It was most probable that this action rose controversy because the opponents were there, and people saw Jesus action as a new teaching and with authority. The opponents they took note about this action, and in 3:2 Mark highlights that they watched closely, so they might accuse Jesus regarding the issue of Sabbath.

The second way is to see this action as a habitual action of Jesus Christ that entered place of worship on Sabbath day.⁶⁶ This argument is reasonable, because as previous discussed, Luke points out that Jesus' custom is to enter a synagogue on Sabbath and read from the scripture. Another occasion portraits Jesus entered a synagogue on Sabbath and preach there (6:1, 2), and fact confirms the idea that Jesus used to enter a synagogue on Sabbath, and it was his habitual action.

There is another phrase that need to be examined syntactically, which is the command of Jesus to the sick man. In Mark 3:3, Jesus asked him to raise up in the center of people and His opponents. The phrase Ἐγείρε εἰς τὸ μέσον occurs in the "imperative mood"⁶⁷ of ἐγείρω (present active imperative). This command could be seen from two meanings of intention of Jesus. Firstly, Jesus wanted to restore the social aspect of this man, since his disability caused him marginalized by the community.⁶⁸ Jesus commanded this person to stand up in the midst of people and His opponents to restore his social value in the society. Another reason of this action is to strengthen the teaching about the essences of Sabbath that was misunderstood by the opponents. Jesus wanted to show him publicly and asked them the question to emphasize the meaning of salvation of the Sabbath day.

Another syntactical element that need to be examined is the adverb of εὐθὺς in the phrase "καὶ ἐξεληθόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι εὐθὺς μετὰ τῶν Ἡρωδιανῶν συμβούλιον ἐδίδουν κατ' αὐτοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν ἀπολέσωσιν." This is the result after Jesus healed the man, then the Pharisees went out and made plot to kill Jesus. This sentence reveals the identity of the opponents of Jesus Christ who wanted to blame him if He would do the miracle. Most of Bible translation point out to the Pharisees who went out, and immediately they made plot with the Herodians. In this translation, the adverb εὐθὺς modifies the verb ἐδίδουν. This way of translation is reasonable, but the way they place the adverb is too far, which is almost in the last sentence.

Probably there is a better way to translate this sentence by seeing the adverb εὐθὺς modify the word ἐξεληθόντες. This word is nearer to the particular adverb rather than the word ἐδίδουν. This understanding means that the Pharisees went out immediately with the Herodians, and they produce plot that might kill Jesus. This way of translation gives hint that the Herodians was there in the synagogue and they went out immediately with the Pharisees. It is reasonable because as previously discussed; the Herodians are closely related with the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders. It also discussed earlier that they also together with the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus regarding the issue of tax to the Caesar. The idea of alliance of Pharisees and Herodians was there, and the teaching of Jesus Christ was emphasized to both group of people.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 119. He pointed out that this adverb "indicate that Jesus was a regular attender of the synagogue on Sabbath days."

⁶⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek Grammar*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 210-211. He emphasize that "the imperative mood is the mood of *intention*" there are four essences of the imperative, they are could be as a command, a prohibition, request and conditional imperative.

⁶⁸ Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, (Danvers, MA: Chalice, 2000), 132. He pointed out that "his disability has put him at the social margins. His healing puts him back in the middle of things."

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Contextual Analysis

It is necessary to analyze the immediate context of the passage in order to trace the issue about Sabbath and synagogue in relating with the Pharisees and Herodians. The passages in Mark 1-3 are talking about the controversy between the Jesus and the Pharisees regarding certain issues like Sabbath, fasting, eating with tax collectors.⁶⁹ From those confrontation, Jesus firmly to perform the remedy because wanted to emphasize certain ideas for the opponents and for people surround them.

One of the most significant is about the Sabbath that occurs in every of the first three chapters of Mark. At the first chapter, Mark portrays Jesus healed a man with unclean spirit in the Capernaum synagogue, which there was no confrontation. The issue of Sabbath repeated again in the second chapter when the disciples plucking ear of corn on Sabbath day. The pharisees blamed Jesus by asking why the disciples did something unlawful on Sabbath. Replying to them, Jesus reminded them about David who ate the bread that was consecrated in the sanctuary. The final statement of Jesus was about the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath. There is another significant statement of Jesus regarding the purpose of Sabbath, which is the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. The third chapter is about the respective episode of healing the man with a withered hand. These narrative composed structurally that could be like below:

A. Drive out an impure spirit on Sabbath in Capernaum synagogue (1:21-28)

X. Sabbath was made for man; Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (confrontation in grainfield) (2:23-28)

A'. Healed a man with shriveled hand on Sabbath in the synagogue (3:1-6)

Based on the structure, it could be seen that the center of the structure is about the confrontation in the grainfield with two significant statements of Jesus; Sabbath was made for man, and Jesus is the Lord of Sabbath. There is a connection between this two statements with the previous and the next narratives. The first and the third episodes portray Jesus healed two different men with particular disabilities on Sabbath day in the synagogue, which is the place of worship. These two occasions intentionally did by Jesus in front of the opponents in order to emphasize the the concept of Sabbath. Sabbath was made for man, so Jesus healed on Sabbath to prove that Sabbath was created for the sake of human beings. Jesus claimed his authority above Sabbath in contrast with the way of Jewish religious leaders observed that day. It is permissible for man to do good and receive good, and it is acceptable for man to save life and being saved.

Beside the immediate context, there are some elements that need to be analyzed regarding the broader context to enlighten the episode of healing on Sabbath. Mark recorded the story when Jesus entered the synagogue, preach there and many were amazed (Mark 6:2). This occasion happened after the healing story of the man with a withered hand. Based on this, it is obvious that Jesus still observed the Sabbath day, and again entered the synagogue to read scripture there.

Mark also recorded further about the continuation of the plot of Pharisees and Herodians. They again made ally to trap Jesus regarding the tax to Caesar, but Jesus answered them wisely (Mark 12:13). It probably confirmed that the Herodians were with Pharisees in the incident in Mark 3. Their religious alliance continue through the political manner.

In the passion narrative, Mark recorded that Jesus died on preparation day, which was the day before the Sabbath (Mark 15:43), then he was laid on the tomb. There is nothing was

⁶⁹ For further discussion, consult Painter, 38.

told about the activity of Jesus on Sabbath, but most probably he “rested” on the tomb. The early in the morning after Sabbath passed Mary and other women were willing to anoint Jesus in the tomb with spices (Mark 16:1,2). When they appeared there, they could not find Jesus’ body since he had been resurrected. After he had risen, he appeared firstly to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9). The author use *σάββατον* to express the idea of the first day of the week. This narrative does not proposed that Jesus resurrected on the Sabbath, but he resurrected on the first day of the week. The Sunday easter was the day after the Sabbath passed. This narrative proposed that the Sunday easter It mostly suggest that the Sunday Easter.

Summary

The miracle of healing of Jesus to the man with a withered hand took place in the synagogue on Sabbath day. This remedy episode are relating with worship because the synagogue was the place of gathering and worship and Sabbath is the day for worship as well. Sabbath originated from the creation and continued to the long history of Israel until the period of intertestament and diaspora until in the period of New Testament. The essence of Sabbath was the day as remberance of creation and becomes the sign of belonging between God and His people. The Sabbath should be observed by ceasing from daily week and and other prohibitions. At the period of Inter-testament, Jewish leader added many requirements and made it as a burden with rigid stipulation. Furthermore, the custum of synagogue started also in the exile when the Jewish separated from their temple. They tried to created situation of gathering in everywhere they lived with the activities of worship, reading scripture and other activities. Later they build building for their place that became the center of Judaism. The peak of activity happened on Sabbath when people gathered together for worship.

When Jesus healed the man, Jesus did it with intention, because he called him in the midst of people and his opponents who were watching him in order to blame him. They were the Pharisees and the Herodians who finally made a plot to kill Jesus. The pharisees are the religious leaders that jealous to Jesus because of his teaching and miracles and they involved with confrontation with Him regarding certain issues, mostly about Sabbath.

Conclusion

There are some implication of theology that could be underlined regarding the episode of healing the withered hand man. Firstly, since Jesus did the miracle healing intentionally, it suggested that He wanted to emphasize the essence of Sabbath to the people and His opponents. The idea is about the Sabbath day as the day of salvation and restoration. Jesus saved the man’s life and gave physical restoration, particularly his sick hand. Ironically, the Pharisees did not get this idea, because their heart was hardened and commited sin on Sabbath by producing plan to kill Jesus. By this episode, Jesus did not abrogate the Sabbath, nor changed it to another day, but he kept on observing that day and restoring the original nuances of the Sabbath.

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