

# RELIGION

Scripture of the Week

Romans 2:1-4

## Insight on the Word: An Eye for What Really Matters

BY MICHAEL LINDSEY,  
Dean of North Portland Bible College

The Bible text for next week's Sunday School lesson is Mark 2:23 through 3:6. This passage is very important for understanding Jesus' concept of true religion. Let me encourage you again to attend the Sunday School of your church this week; I know you'll be blessed!

Have you ever known someone who "majors on the minors"? That is, someone who gets so tied up in the details of living that they make impossible demands on themselves and on others around them. Such a person usually ends up frustrated with the people around him/her, very hard to live with, and totally stressed out! Now does that person sound familiar?

What happens is that that person has a hard time distinguishing between the important things and the good important things; between the most ambitions and goals, and the best. And I think we can all identify with that problem some times. We know we need to value our children and spouse, but we also need to do good quality work in school or on the job, in order to provide for the family. We need time for recreation, but we also need to be available to help a friend in need, or to counsel a loved one. And these values cannot be

simply prioritized, can they? Sometimes one value seems more important, sometimes it seems a trivial or even selfish matter.

The same is true in the realm of religion--the practice of our faith in God. There are some outward signs of Christianity which people look for, which label us as "godly" people. These include our consistent church attendance, and abstinence from obvious vices and sins. The standards on some issues vary from church to church in our community, but many churches have some standard on "godly" dress in church, and elsewhere; "godly" entertainments, and things to shun; or "godly" music and worship.

These standards are often unstated, but they do exert a powerful influence on whether a person can be accepted into a congregation warmly, and whether that person will even be willing to confess Christ as Lord. I suspect many readers who are not now active in a local church, can relate incidents in which they felt shunned, or ostracized, or just uncomfortable, because of standards of "holy behavior" in a particular church which discouraged them from participating.

The Lord Jesus himself was a victim of this kind of religious legalism.

That's what today's text describes for us. And I hope as we study this scripture we will look at our own attitudes toward the behavior of others, both church members and non-members, and ask the Lord to give us "an eye for the things that matter" in Christian living.

Both the incidents in our Bible text refer to working on the Sabbath. And there was a law, the Fourth of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:8-11) which forbade God's people from doing any kind of work on the Sabbath. But the problem arose in defining "work." Was it work to build a fire, or to cook, or to travel (how far?), or to write? So the teachers of the Law had set up certain definitions of "work" (one list in the Mishnah has 39 acts) so people would know what they couldn't do on the Sabbath.

One of those "works" was reaping grain. That makes sense, doesn't it? But the Pharisees taught that even picking a handful of grain to eat raw as one walked, was still reaping grain, and therefore forbidden on the Sabbath.

The disciples of Jesus, like so many other Jews of their time, were not aware of all the fine points of Law as taught by the scribes and Pharisees, so they just helped themselves to some grain as they walked with the Lord. The Law

itself permitted this kind of do-it-yourself hospitality (Deut. 23:35). [Please note that "corn fields" and "ears of corn" (2:23 KJV) refer to wheat or barley grain, and the heads of ripe grain. Corn as we know it (maize) was found only in the Americas and a few locations of West African until Columbus.]

So the Pharisees who noticed the Lord's disciples took their complaint to Jesus. They implied that Jesus was not teaching his followers very well, or they would know better than "reaping grain" with their hands on the Sabbath. This may seem quite trivia to us today, but the Sabbath was an important institution to them, and it had to be "protected."

Jesus' response did not relate to the Sabbath as such, but to another holy institution, the Temple worship. He reminded his accusers that David and his men, when they were running from King Saul, had taken the holy bread of the Tabernacle and eaten it, though the letter of the Law permitted only priests to eat it (Mark 2:25-26; the history is recorded in 1 Sam. 21:1-6; the law of the holy bread in Lev. 24:5-9). The Bible record does not condemn this violation of the Law, for the hunger of David's men was a more compelling law in this case. The Lord never in-

tended the laws of worship to supercede the basic law of loving one's neighbor, and meeting real human need.

Jesus then applied this to the Sabbath laws the Pharisees championed. These laws also were set up by God for the good of humanity, to provide rests and opportunity for regular worship. They were not meant as a moral straight jacket to limit and complicate their lives. It seems to me that this is a good principle for us to consider, as we evaluate our moral standards on issues to which the Bible does not speak clearly.

But first, let's look at the other incident (Mark 3:1-6). The Lord himself was under scrutiny by his opponents for his conduct on the Sabbath day. He knew fully what they were thinking, and yet he proceeded to "work" on the Sabbath day--and right in a synagogue! He did the work of a physician, of course, by healing; and he did it without caution, before the whole assembly.

And yet he first explained himself, through two rhetorical questions. His point was clear to them, as it should be to us. At its heart, the Law was intended to lead to doing good; and sometimes doing nothing is really doing evil. Jesus' healing touch was good, and should have motivated praise in the assembly (see 1:21-28); instead, evil men were

ready to plot murder (3:6). And note this well: these evil men would have been considered religious paragons, and upright community leaders.

So what should we say? Like the Pharisees of old, many times we also set up rules and interpretations of the Bible laws, which fit our own lifestyle and tradition. And we aren't always aware when these rules get in the way of true worship and true holiness.

As an example, we have a healthy concern for modesty in clothing, based on biblical principle (1 Tim. 2:9). But this concern has grown through tradition into rules (stated or not) about proper dress for worship, or for other public settings. And people who don't dress that way are treated like heathens, while new believers are almost forced to change their ways. But I submit to you that Jesus was more interested in helping people grow in the Lord on the inside, than in how they looked on the outside.

As we meditate on this Bible text, let's remember the two great commandments of the Law (Matt. 22:34-40). Real holiness must be based on love for God and love for our fellow humans. As we encourage each other to live holy lives, let's pray to God for an eye for the things that matter.

### In Loving Memory of Markel DeAndre Sayles

September 30, 1977 - February 20, 1992



Services were held Wednesday, February 26, 1992 at 12:00 P.M. at Sharon Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 5209 N.E. 22nd Avenue, Portland, Oregon. Interment was in Rose City Cemetery 5625 N.E. Fremont, Portland, Oregon.

Markel DeAndre Sayles was born on September 30, 1977, in Berkeley, California to Tanya Sayles. At the age of two weeks old, Markel was given to his great-grandmother, Vergie L. Sloan, to be raised by her in Portland, Oregon.

Instead of dwelling on our loss, let us remember the joy Markel brought to our lives with his beautiful personality and smile.

Markel will be remembered by his mother, Tanya Sayles of California; brothers, Renardo Williams and JoMonie Sayles, both of California; brothers, sister Chantany Sayles of California; grandmother, Helen Sloan of California; grandfather, Curtis Sayles of California; great-grandmothers, Vergie Sloan of Oregon and Thelma Sayles of California; great-grandfather, Charles Sloan, Sr. of Texas; great-great-uncles, Nathaniel Carter and Joseph Sloan, both of Oregon; great-great-aunts, Deather Sloan and Sally Carter both of Oregon; great-aunts, Chantay Sloan, Marilyn Sloan and Rita Sloan, all of Oregon; great-uncles, Jeffrey Sloan and Charles Sloan, Jr, both of Oregon; and a host of cousins and friends.

### Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Inspirational Choir of Bethel A.M.E. Church will celebrate their Annual Day in Concert on Sunday, March 15, 1992, at 4:00 p.m. The public is invited to help celebrate 15 years of singing praises to the Lord. The theme this year is "Spirit of the Living God, Fall Fresh On Me."

A reception will be held in the Fellowship Hall immediately following the concert. The concert will be held at:

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
5828 N.E. 8th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97211-3704  
288-5429 or 288-5420

If you need additional information or have any questions, please call and leave a message for Kay Wallace at one of the phone numbers listed above, and I will return your call.

### Phil Walden Appreciation Banquet

On Saturday, March 7, 1992, at Jefferson High School's Cafeteria located at 5210 N. Kerby Avenue, a grand banquet will be held to honor one of the community's unsung heroes, Mr. Phillip Walden.

According to one of the program planners, Phil Walden has been acting like the Pied Piper of Albina for nearly thirty years. He has been responsible for many young men and women's success in sports, such as: track & field, baseball, football and basketball.

If there are any members of the Albina Roadrunners, ASP Summer Program or Golden Ball Basketball who are interested in attending this function or who would like to become a working part of this project, you should contact -- Sis. Mattie Ann Callier-Spears at 281-5380 or Jon "Hammer" Richardson at 240-5323.

Tickets: \$12 - Adults and 6 - K-12 grade  
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## St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church

8101 N. Fiske Avenue  
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Church Phone: 289-0147

Study Phone: 289-1911

**Sunday Service**  
10:45  
**Sunday School**  
9:30  
**Bible Study**  
6:00  
**Evening Service**  
7:00 P.M.



Pastor, Rev. James C.E. Faulkner

**Theme: Whatever you're going to do for the Lord, do it now**

1 Peter 4:11

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Denise A. Bell, Pastor

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**(503) 287-0261**  
Phillip S. Nelson Pastor

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Men's Training Leadership  
Women's Bible Class 5:00 pm.  
Evening Worship 6:00 pm.  
Attended nursery for all services  
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He that is too good to realize that he need to be saved, cannot be helped. But he that recognize he has a need, can be helped.

**What A Friend We Have In Jesus**

Are you a friend of Jesus?  
Do you want Jesus to be your friend?  
We want to be your friend and would love to have you as our friend.

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There is a place and a work here for you.

Rev. A. G. May, Pastor