

Mark Chapter 2

Verses 1-12:

Jesus continues to astound (and offend), by extraordinary works and claims.

Mark 2:1 "And again he entered into Capernaum after [some] days; and it was noised that he was in the house."

“He was in the house”:

This was likely Peter’s home, where Jesus had taken up temporary residence (Matt. 4:13).

Jesus comes back into Capernaum from His desert outposts (1:45).

As we said in the previous lesson, Peter’s home was on the outskirts of Capernaum.

Jesus had fled to the wilderness to avoid the huge mobs of people.

We see here, that Jesus had quietly come back into town, but someone saw Him return and now it was all over town that He was back.

Mark 2:2 "And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive [them], no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them."

“The word”:

The good news of the gospel, that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, for the forgiveness of sins.

We can see that in just a very short time this house filled with people.

In fact, so many people packed in this house to hear Jesus preach that not even one more person could squeeze in the front door.

We know from the previous lesson, that Jesus’ message was not what they were used to hearing. His message was of power and authority.

We know also, that Jesus’ message was not of formality, because here we saw Him preaching in the home.

The scribes went strictly by the formality of worship in the synagogue.

They were hungry for this type of preaching, which was for all the people.

Mark 2:3 "And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four."

“Sick of the palsy”:

Since he was lying on a bed, the man’s paralysis was severe, perhaps he was a quadriplegic.

Palsy is a progressive disease.

It seems this man's palsy had gotten to an extreme case.

He was unable to walk.

Palsy has terrible shaking associated with it and is actually like a short circuit in the brain.

Most people with palsy are able to walk, so this had to be someone who had an advanced disease, because it took four men to bring him.

Mark 2:4 "And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken [it] up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay."

“They uncovered the roof”:

Most homes in Israel had flat roofs used for relaxation in the cool of the day and for sleeping on hot nights.

And there was usually an external stairway that extended to the roof.

Often, as here, the roof was made of slabs of burnt or dried clay that were placed on supporting beams which stretched from wall to wall.

The builder then spread a uniform coat of fresh, wet clay over those slabs of hardened clay to serve as a seal against the rain.

The paralytic’s friends took him up to the top of such a house and dug out the top coat of clay, and thus removing several of the slabs until they made enough room to lower him down into Jesus’ presence.

We see here, that the crowd was so large; there was no way to get to Jesus through the crowd.

I see great faith, not only of the man with the palsy, but with his friends who would not give up on getting to Jesus.

First of all, they had great love for their friend to go to this much trouble to get him to Jesus.

Most of all, they had to believe strongly that if they could get him in Jesus' presence, he would be healed.

It seems they broke open the roof of the house and let him down right in front of Jesus.

Mark 2:5 "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

“Jesus saw their faith”:

The aggressive, persistent effort of the paralytic’s friends was visible evidence of their faith in Christ to heal.

“Son, thy sins be forgiven thee”:

Many Jews in that day believed that all disease and affliction was a direct result of one’s sins.

This paralytic may have believed that as well; thus he would have welcomed forgiveness of his sins before healing.

The Greek verb for “are forgiven” refers to sending or driving away (Psalm 103:12; Jer. 31:34; Mic. 7:19).

Thus, Jesus dismissed the man’s sin and then freed him from the guilt of it (see the note on Matthew 9:2).

Touched by their obvious and active trust, Jesus acts.

But instead of a physical healing alone, Jesus proclaims a remission of “sins”.

Notice, Jesus recognized their faith first.

Faith impresses Jesus.

On many occasions, Jesus said your faith has made you whole.

I do not believe that all disease is because of sin in a person's life, but I do believe some diseases are brought on ourselves because of sin in our lives.

The wrong type of sex brings all sorts of terrible diseases.

I personally believe that Aids falls into that category.

Not all people who acquire aids (but the majority), had committed sin causing their disease.

Some disease is associated with sin.

Sin is a sickness itself.

At any rate, we see here that in this particular case, this disease was because of sin that was in the man's life.

Jesus went to the root cause of the disease and said thy sins be forgiven thee.

We cannot assume from this that all palsy is brought on by sin.

Verses 6-7:

“Scribes” were professional students and teachers of the Old Testament and Jewish tradition surrounding it.

They also served as judges in the Jewish legal body, the Sanhedrin.

They were influential men in society.

They take strong issue with Jesus’ seeming presumptuousness, for it was common knowledge to students of the Old Testament that forgiving sin is God’s prerogative alone.

Jesus is implicitly making a claim to divinity, which to the Scribes ranks as blasphemy.

Mark 2:6 "But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,"

“The scribes”:

See the note on Matthew 2:4; compare 1:22.

Mark 2:7 "Why doth this [man] thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?"

“This man ... blasphemies”:

The scribes were correct in saying that only God can forgive sins (Isa. 43:25), but incorrect in saying Jesus blasphemed.

They refused to recognize Jesus’ power as coming from God; also much less that He Himself was God.

These scribes were not there to be of help in this ministry of Jesus.

They were here to spy and criticize.

In verse 7 above, they showed just how little they really knew or believed about Jesus.

Their first mistake was in believing that Jesus was just a man.

Without realizing it, they made a true statement.

God alone can forgive sins.

Jesus is God the Word caught up in the body of a man.

This was the truth they failed to see.

Many in our churches today cannot see Jesus as anything but man.

They are like these scribes, doubting, because they put limits on Jesus.

Were Jesus just a man, the scribes would have been correct.

Jesus, as we have said in all of these lessons, was God that was manifest in the flesh: Immanuel, God with us.

God forgives sins anytime or anyplace, for anyone He wants to.

Mark 2:8 "And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?"

“In his spirit”:

This can also be translated, “by His spirit.”

This is not the Holy Spirit, but the omniscient mind of the Savior.

Jesus senses their indignation and addresses them directly, as in Mark He is inclined to do.

It seems that these scribes did not speak out openly against Jesus, but they were just having very evil thoughts.

They were probably, afraid of the people too much to speak out openly.

Just the fact that Jesus knew what they were thinking in their hearts should have told them that He was no mere man.

Jesus nearly always answered them with a question.

He really was saying to them: if there were no good results, you would have room to complain.

Judge whether it is right or wrong by the results.

Mark 2:9 "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, [Thy] sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?"

“Whether is it easier ... ?

It is much easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven you”.

No human can prove that such a thing occurred since it is invisible.

Commanding a paralytic to walk would be more difficult to say convincingly.

However, because the actions of the paralytic would immediately verify the effect of the command (see note on Matt. 9:5).

Modern English would drop the “whether”.

This man sick of the palsy had been around for the scribes to minister to, and they had not been able to help him.

Jesus, to me, was saying here, why complain about the manner it is done in, if it works?

Verses 10-11:

“Son of man” is one of Jesus’ favorite self-designations, used some 14 times in Mark.

Scholars debate its exact meaning, some were still incredibly denying that Jesus applied the term to Himself.

But such skepticism is surely misplaced.

It seems to be a deliberately unclear title, one that could conjure up images of divine presence and might (Dan. 7:13-14).

But which could at the same time give willful skeptics enough rope, so to speak, to hang themselves in the tortuous coils of their stubborn doubt.

By healing sickness in conjunction with forgiving sin, Jesus is not equating physical infirmity with spiritual depravity.

Yet there is some ultimate connection, for sickness and death apparently invaded humanity through sin (See Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12).

Someday, by God's grace in Christ, sin, death, and all sickness will be vanquished.

Jesus' exercise of divine forgiveness here and its immediate consequences are perhaps advance tokens of the wondrous boon of ultimate redemption.

In Jesus, the sphere of God's restorative influence, His kingdom, is indeed at hand (1:15), and that with great power.

Mark 2:10 "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)"

"But that ye may know":

Jesus' power to heal the paralytic's physical infirmities proved the veracity of His claim and power to forgive sins.

"Son of man":

Jesus used this term for Himself to emphasize His humiliation (see notes on 14:62; Matt. 8:20).

It appears 14 times in Mark (verse 10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62).

Mark 2:11 "I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

I believe here, that Jesus was saying to these scribes, you do not understand who I am.

He called Himself, "Son of Man" because that was who they believed He was.

"Son" is capitalized.

Jesus' power was not diminished just because He was housed in the body of a man.

His power is not just in heaven, but here on the earth as well.

Mark 2:12 "And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion."

Here as previously (1:22, 28, 45; 2:7), Mark calls attention to the response Jesus provoked.

The observers have never seen anything like this.

Just as the wind obeyed Jesus in Matthew, we see here, that this man obeyed the voice of Jesus and did just exactly what Jesus told him to do.

He never doubted for a moment that he could do what Jesus told him to, and he did it.

You can imagine how amazed the people were.

They had not seen miracles like this done by the scribes.

This was something brand new.

They realized that this was from God and they glorified Him.

Verses 13-22:

Jesus returns to activity by the lake.

Mark pictures a constant coming and going of crowds.

Mark 2:13 "And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them."

We see here, that when Jesus left the house and went back to the seaside, all these people followed Him; and He taught them.

These people were anxious to hear what Jesus had to say now, because He had the answers to their problems.

They had just witnessed a man healed of a long-time illness, and they realized Jesus had something these scribes did not have.

Mark 2:14 "And as he passed by, he saw Levi the [son] of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him."

“Levi the son of Alphaeus” (one of the 12), more commonly known as Matthew.

“Levi” is known also as Matthew, the tax collector (publican).

“Sitting at the receipt of custom”:

Matthew was a publican, a tax collector, a despised profession in Palestine because such men were viewed as traitors.

Tax collectors were Jews who had bought tax franchises from the Roman government.

Any amount they collected over what Rome required they were allowed to keep.

Thus, many tax collectors became wealthy at the expense of their own people (see the notes on Matthew 5:46; 9:9).

“He arose and followed him”:

This simple action of Matthew signified his conversion.

Because his response was so immediate, it is likely Matthew was already convicted of his sin and recognized his need of forgiveness.

This man would not have been someone the scribes would have chosen for Christian endeavors.

As far as making money, this was a good job.

Matthew gave up a lot of worldly income to follow Jesus.

Matthew came without hesitation when Jesus called.

Mark 2:15 "And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him."

“Sat at meat”:

This can also be translated, “reclining at table,” as common posture for eating when guests had been present.

According to (Luke 5:29), this was a feast that Matthew gave in Jesus’ honor.

“Many publicans”:

There were two categories of tax collectors:

(1) Gabbai collected general taxes on land and property, and on income, referred to as poll or registration taxes;

(2) Mokhes collected a wide variety of use taxes, like our import duties, business license fees, and toll fees.

There were two categories of mokhes: great mokhes hired others to collect taxes for them; small mokhes did their own assessing and collecting.

Matthew was a small mokhe.

It is likely representatives of both classes attended Matthew’s feast.

All of them were considered both religious and social outcasts.

“Sinners”:

A term the Jews used to describe people who had no respect for the Mosaic Law or rabbinic traditions, and were therefore the most vile and worthless of people.

“Sat also together”:

Literally “were reclining with “Jesus” willingness, to associate with tax collectors and sinners by sharing in the feast with them, deeply offended the scribes and Pharisees.

By now Jesus has attracted a number of devotees.

But He has also managed to appeal to those whom most pious Jews of that time and place would have avoided.

The Hebrews were extremely careful who they associated with.

They would not fellowship with people of the world and especially with tax collectors.

Jesus had broken the pattern again.

He was doing something in meeting with these tax collectors and sinners that the scribes would never do.

Jesus held promise even for these people that the synagogue had rejected.

Verses 16-17:

With some irony Jesus deflects the barb of His detractors, who first seek to stir up His own disciples against Him.

For Jesus as well as for the Old Testament, no man is “righteous” in God’s sight by virtue of his own goodness.

The point is that Jesus seeks out those who, being in need, sense and own up to it.

“Sinners” refers to common folk who in their religious practices were less scrupulous than the Pharisees, and often more responsive to Jesus than cultivated religious people.

Mark 2:16 "And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"

“Scribes and Pharisees”:

This phrase indicates that not all scribes were Pharisees (regarding Scribes, see the note on Matthew 2:4).

Pharisees were a legalistic sect of Jews known for their strict devotion to the ceremonial law (see note on Matt. 3:7).

Even at this early stage of Jesus' ministry, these scribes and Pharisees knew that they were no match for Jesus.

They came to the disciples and talked to them.

In a sense, they were saying, don't you know that in our law it is forbidden to eat with people like this?

They asked the disciples why He was doing this sinful thing.

Mark 2:17 "When Jesus heard [it], he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

"I came not to call the righteous":

In the parallel passage (Luke 5:32), sinners are called "to repentance."

The repentant person, the one who recognizes he is a sinner and who turns from his sin, is the object of Jesus' call.

The person who is sinful but thinks he is righteous refuses to acknowledge his need to repent of his sin (see notes on Matt. 9:12-13; John 9:39-41).

We all know that everyone has need of Jesus as Savior.

I believe that Jesus in speaking to these self-righteous people was telling them that He didn't come to help those who did not want His help.

Jesus came to help whosoever will.

These scribes and Pharisees would not accept His help.

He was telling them, if you are already perfect, you don't need My help.

Jesus came to save the lost.

A person must realize he needs help, before they will receive help.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

You can easily see from this Scripture above in Romans, that He was speaking to them this way because of their self-righteousness.

Mark Chapter 2 Questions

1. As soon as Jesus went back to Capernaum and entered the house, what happened?
2. Why had Jesus gone to the wilderness?
3. What was said that makes us know there was no more room in the house?
4. After all these people gathered, what did Jesus do?
5. Why had so many come to hear Him preach?
6. Who brought the man sick of palsy to Jesus?
7. What did they do when they could not get him in the door?
8. What kind of disease is palsy?
9. What do we see in these four men who would not give up, until they got the man sick of palsy to Jesus?
10. "When Jesus saw their _____, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."
11. Why did this man have palsy?
12. What did these scribes say Jesus spoke?
13. What truth did they speak unknowingly?
14. Why had the scribes come to the house?
15. What did the scribes call Jesus that is the same mistake many church goers make today?
16. How did Jesus know what they thought?
17. What could Jesus have said and gotten the same results?
18. Why did Jesus forgive his sins, instead of just saying be healed?
19. Why did Jesus call Himself, Son of man?

20. What did the man sick of the palsy do?
21. How did this affect the people?
22. Who did they praise for this?
23. When Jesus left the house and went to the seaside, what did the people do?
24. What did Jesus go to the seaside to do?
25. Who did Jesus see as He passed the place of tax collecting?
26. What is this man's other name?
27. Who was this man the son of?
28. What two other books tell of Matthew's call?
29. Who were with Jesus that the scribes and Pharisees did not approve of?
30. Who did the scribes and Pharisees complain to about Jesus' behavior?
31. When Jesus heard their complaints, what did He say to them?
32. In Romans 3:23, we see what?
33. What was Jesus telling these scribes and Pharisees that they were?