



## 1. Mark 2.1-12 - Jesus In Capernaum/Healing And Forgiving A Paralytic

- 1 - Mark chapter 2 opens with Jesus *returning* to the village of Capernaum. Earlier, in 1.21, Jesus, along with the four fishermen that he recently called — Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John — (all five of them) went to the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath day. In addition to his teaching on that occasion, Jesus also healed — more specifically, Jesus cast out an unclean spirit — from a man who was at the synagogue on that occasion. Afterward, Jesus, with the four apostles, went to the house of Simon and Andrew that was close to the synagogue (Mk 1.29). Jesus cured Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever, and later that day Jesus would heal many who were sick and demon-possessed. On the following morning, Jesus arose long before daybreak, and he went out to pray. After Simon and others who were looking for him found Jesus, Jesus said “let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth” (1.38). Similar to what we saw in Matthew 4.23, Mark 1.39 tells us that Jesus “was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” The first chapter of Mark closes with an account of Jesus cleansing a leper.
- 1 - In verse 1 then, when the second chapter starts with the words “and *again* he entered Capernaum after some days,” it assumes that we had just read — and thus just remembered — that, though Jesus was in Capernaum earlier in the first chapter, he was, in the latter part of that chapter, traveling around Galilee, preaching and healing as he went.
- 1 - The latter part of verse one informs us that, eventually, people heard that Jesus had returned to Capernaum, and “that he was in the house.” Once again, we observe a simple statement about Jesus’ house in the village of Capernaum. It figures prominently in his Galilean ministry, shows us that Jesus lived among the people — *literally* in the house of Simon and Andrew — and that many of Jesus’ disciples were often in *that house*, to meet with Jesus.
- 2 - The disciples were *not* the only ones who came to Jesus in that house in the village of Capernaum. Verse two tells us, that when people heard that Jesus had returned to Capernaum, they came to that house. So many came that there was no more room for anyone else to enter.

- 2 - As they were there, Jesus “preached the word to them.” We are *not* told what the content of Jesus’ message was, but as we have already learned from the opening chapter in Mark’s gospel, Jesus message was *kingdom-centric*, *repentance-centric* and *gospel-centric* (1.15).
- 3 - As Jesus was in the house preaching the word, four men brought a paralyzed man to Jesus in order to be healed by him.
- 4 - There were so many people in the house, that these four men were unable to get close to Jesus. Thus, they went up on the roof, opened it up where Jesus was, and they let the paralyzed man down toward Jesus.
- 5 - Jesus, seeing their faith, spoke to the paralyzed man and said, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”
- 6 - What Jesus said — that the sins of the paralyzed man would be forgiven, *assumedly* by Jesus — caught the attention of the scribes who were sitting nearby.
- 6-7 - The text tells us that these men, the scribes, were “reasoning” — ie., thinking — to themselves. They were thinking “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” This corresponds with what we just now said was only assumed: The scribes understood that it was *Jesus* who *actively* declared that this man’s sins were forgiven. From their perspective, this was blasphemy, because only *God* could forgive sins. What they failed to realize, of course, was this: Jesus *was* the Son of God, thus on par with God the Father, and so was as able to forgive sins as was God the Father. Their question was legitimate: “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” If the forgiveness of sins was *exclusively* within the domain and within the power/the right of God, and if *Jesus* was able to forgive sins, then Jesus *must* have been God. The only difference: Jesus was the *incarnate* Son-of-God — ie., God in the flesh.
- 8 - Jesus, who according to the closing verses of John 2, knew what was going on in the minds of men, realized what the scribes were thinking. Jesus asked them, in order to make them think even more, “Why do you reason this way?”
- 9 - Jesus asked the scribes two questions: First, what’s easier, to simply say to the paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven? Or second, to tell the paralyzed man to take up his bed and walk?
- 10 - Jesus had a reason for asking these questions. Jesus wanted the scribes — and everyone else who would witness what took place here — (he wanted them all) to realize that he, the Son of Man, “has power on earth to forgive sins.” What Jesus was about to say next, indeed, what was about to *happen* next would make that knowledge — that he could forgive sins as the Son of Man while he was on the earth — (would make that knowledge) real.
- 11 - Jesus then spoke to the paralyzed man, instructing him to “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” Those were just words, words that were in *one sense* no different than his previous words, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” Both, to *this* point in the narrative anyway, were nothing more than words that Jesus *physically* verbalized before the scribes and the other listeners on this occasion. *That* was about to change.
- 12 - What happened? Starting with one of Mark’s most frequently used terms, the word “immediately,” the paralyzed man did *exactly* as Jesus instructed him to do. “He arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all.” The reaction of those who witnessed this: They were *amazed*. They *glorified* God. They exclaimed that they had *never* seen anything like this before.
- There are multiple dimensions of Mark’s account in this context that are worthy of our extended thought:
  - First, the *friendship* of the four-men who brought this paralyzed man to Jesus. We know nothing of their relationships in this passage other than what we see here. The extent to which these four men were willing to go — and then, actually went — depicts a love, a

concern, and a compassion that, in and of itself, was amazing. Not as amazing as what Jesus would do, but still amazing in its own right.

- Second, and probably the most important, the physical condition of the paralyzed man himself. His physical condition was *not*, of course, more important than "*who*" Jesus was or "*what*" Jesus was about to do — ie., heal him and forgive him of his sins — but it was the most important *chronologically* in that it was his pre-existing condition, his paralysis, that set the events that we witness here in motion.
- Third, to amplify what we noted in the first place, the extraordinary extent to which these men brought their friend to Jesus. It appears from the text, that they might have first attempted — or at least thought about — bringing the paralyzed man into the house in the usual way, through the door. But, as the passage tells us, there was simply no room. To go to the lengths that they did, getting the man on a stretcher up to the roof top, then opening up the roof so that they would have access to let him down below where Jesus was, all so that the man could be healed ... that's an incredible display of friendship and of faith.
- Fourth, Jesus recognition of their relationship and their faith. Faith in Jesus' ability, and in his willingness, to heal. And then, if not pre-existing faith in Jesus' ability and willingness to forgive sins, a faith in both *after* the fact. As we journeyed through Matthew we saw many examples of faith, faith that Jesus could do what Jesus eventually did, and often without ever having seen Jesus do anything like it before. The Roman centurion in Matthew 8 believed that Jesus could heal his servant, likely a Roman soldier under his command, (that Jesus could heal him) from a distance. Jairus believed that just by Jesus touching his daughter she could be healed. Jesus, of course, did something greater. By the time that Jesus arrived at Jairus' home his daughter had died. Instead of healing her, Jesus brought her back to life. These four men — and their paralyzed friend — all *nameless* in Mark's account by the way, nevertheless become contemporary first century witnesses and heroes of faith, so much so that their faith impacts us twenty centuries/two thousand years later.
- Fifth, the religious leaders', the scribes', reaction to Jesus' claim to forgive sins. Their reaction — expressed *only* in thought at first — but verbalized, or explained, by what Jesus said *later*, was that Jesus was speaking blasphemously. Biblically, you can speak blasphemously by attributing what God does to something, or someone, *other* than God. You are, then, attributing God-like qualities and God-like abilities to something that's *not* God. And that's blasphemous. But, you can also speak blasphemously, by failing to properly attribute something that God has actually done to God himself. There's a sense in which you can not commit one sense of blasphemy without the other, but there's also a case to be made that God's word addresses them individually. In this context, the scribes thought Jesus did something blasphemously — more specifically, that Jesus *said* something blasphemously — just by uttering the words "Son, your sins are forgiven you." On another occasion, recorded for us in Matthew 12.22ff, after Jesus cast a demon from a man, the Pharisees said "this fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." Here, the Pharisees failed to give credit to Jesus as the Son of God, *and* they attributed what Jesus did, exorcizing this demon, to Beelzebub, the prince of demons.
- Sixth, the scribes' understanding about who God was *and* what God could do. Though they *obviously* believed that Jesus spoke blasphemously, their underlying premise was correct. They reasoned in their hearts, asking this question: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" They were correct. *Only God* could forgive sins. What they failed to

understand was this: Jesus, the Son of God, sent from God, with the power and the authority and the will and the love to do *all* that God could and would do — something that we find developed at length in John 5 — (Jesus) as *the* Son of God could *also* forgive sins. That was true *not* because Jesus was asserting and affirming authority *outside* of God — ie., in addition to God — but rather because Jesus was *actually* God in the flesh, the *incarnate* Son of God, the *eternal* Word made flesh (Jn 1.14).

- Seventh, consider their own awareness. At this point, still *early* in the ministry of Jesus according to Mark's narrative — consider that Jesus *was really* the son of God, *and* therefore *able* to forgive sins. Though we have the perspective of hindsight — because we can read through the complete text of Scripture and see, after it was all “said and done” that *what* Jesus *did* and *who* Jesus *was* was always a part of Scripture, even in the First Testament record — better, *not just in*, but an express and an intentional part of the First Testament record — (though we can read and understand that from a 2,000 year *after* the fact perspective), what the scribes were *then, for the first time*, witnessing was *brand new* to them. You can understand *why* they thought *what* they thought about Jesus' statement.
- Eighth, consider the impact that this would have on those who witnessed this event. We will return to this in more detail later.
- And then finally, ninth, Jesus' powerful segue into demonstrating something visible — his ability to *actually* and *physically* heal the man — that proved to everyone there that he had *both* the power to *heal* and the power to *forgive sins*.
  - Jesus question, “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’?,” needs a bit of explanation. Especially the first part of the question, “which is easier?”
  - It's certainly easy to *literally* say the words “your sins are forgiven,” and it's *equally* easy to *literally* say “take up your bed and walk.” I just said those two things *just now*. They were *equally* easy to say. Even in the context of Mark 2, they would have been *equally* easy to say. But, making them *reality*, making what the words *intentionally* mean become something *real* and *not* just spoken words, well, that's a very different story.
  - Jesus' point was this. Jesus *said* — *Jesus voiced the words* — “your sins are forgiven you,” which from the perspective of the scribes who heard it, was *nothing* more than just that, words, *blasphemous* words. Furthermore, from *their* perspective, Jesus did *nothing* more than *simply say* the words “your sins are forgiven you.” Just *hearing* what Jesus said did *not* reveal *any* physical change, any *visible* physical change, that could corroborate the words that Jesus spoke. *Nothing* physical happened that supported the claim that the paralyzed man's sins were, at *that* moment and *because* of what Jesus just *said*, *actually* forgiven. All *just* words from the scribes' perspective. Words that, because they did *not* *recognize* and because they did *not* *accept* who Jesus was — the very Son of God — were simply blasphemous.
  - Thus, by asking the question “which was easier” Jesus readily acknowledged that saying “your sins are forgiven” — even though they really and legitimately were forgiven — (that *just saying* the words) *looked “easy”* to those who were watching this event unfold. But, by telling the man to “take up your bed and walk” — and *not* just saying it, but then actually *seeing* the paralyzed man *do* what Jesus instructed him to do — *that* would have been an *undeniable* and

*visible* demonstration that what Jesus had *just* said, was what Jesus could *undoubtedly* make happen. That reinforced what Jesus had just said about the forgiveness of sins. It, *too, really* happened. Even though forgiveness was *not* visible, Jesus' *physical* healing of the paralyzed man supported his claim to be able to forgive. Incidentally, on this occasion, there's no record that Jesus did *anything* to heal the man *other* than command him to take up his bed and walk. Jesus did *not* touch the man. Jesus did not, as he did on another occasion, mix saliva and mud to anoint the man (Jn 9.6). Jesus did nothing physically to the man. Jesus only — and we are not diminishing what he did by using the word "only" here — Jesus did *nothing* more than instruct the man to take up his bed and walk. What kind of power, what kind of *spoken* power enables what you say to *actually* come to pass? Answer: The same kind of power that could say “let there be light, and there was light” (Gen. 1.3). The same kind of power that could say — and then make it happen — “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

- What's so incredible in this, and almost every biblical account about the life, the teachings and the miracles of Jesus, was just *how far* Jesus went in order to make *sure* that the people around him — skeptics, faithful and everything in between — (just how far Jesus went to make sure) that they were all given *more* than ample opportunity and *more* than ample evidence to draw conclusions from his *actions* and from his *words* that Jesus really was different. That even though Jesus occupied the physical body of a man as they all did, his ability to *not* only say, but *to do/to make real* just what he said — regarding extraordinary claims, like healing and forgiving sins — that Jesus could *legitimately* confirm his words.
- The reasons that Jesus provided for faith were, in this context, undeniable. The biblical record as a whole, including the matter of fact/casual way in which these events are revealed, was intended to convey the same degree of faith — and for the *same* reasons — to the *next* generation of those who, though *not* physically present, would *read* these accounts, and then hopefully, draw the *same* conclusions as those who *literally* witnessed what Jesus said and what Jesus did on this occasion.
- Think for a moment about the response of the audience. Once again we read the word “amazed.” In Mark 1 Jesus' audience was *astonished* at his teaching (1.22) and *amazed* when Jesus cast an unclean spirit from a man (1.27). In this context, when Jesus' listeners saw the man take up his bed and walk, they were “all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this!” (2.12)
- These accounts tell us that what Jesus taught and what Jesus did was *not* normal/ not every day fare. Unknown, itinerant, preachers, did *not* just routinely claim to be able to forgive sins, and then back it up by physically healing a man who was obviously paralyzed. Little known Messianic-wanna-be's did *not* do what Jesus the *real* Messiah did.
- This account, like many of those registered in Scripture, was designed to induce faith. Though Mark does not have the same sort of purpose statement that we find in John 20.30-31, what we witness in this account nevertheless *parallels* that purpose statement. John stated that the signs he recorded were written in order to produce faith, a faith that would lead to eternal life. Here's what John said: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the

Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (Jn 20.30-31)

- Mark, indeed *all* of the gospel writers, were doing just that. They recorded the *miracles* of Jesus — and the *teachings* of Jesus — and they did so to produce *faith* in the minds of the *next* generation of believers, those who would *not* have the privilege of seeing *firsthand* what Jesus did. They *could* and *would*, come to the *same* degree of faith, as those who saw and heard what Jesus did and taught.
- The biblical record as a whole — *not* just the gospel narratives — was intended to convey the *same degree of faith* to those who *read* these accounts as those who *witnessed* them firsthand.
- The audience in this context was amazed (vs 12). In Mark 1 Jesus' audience was *astonished* at his teaching (1.22) and *amazed* when he cast an unclean spirit from a man (1.27). Here, when Jesus' listeners saw the man take up his bed and walk, they were "all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this!" (2.12)
- Why were they all amazed and astonished? Because unknown, itinerant preachers, did *not* routinely claim to be able to forgive sins, and then back it up — prove their claim — by healing a man who was clearly paralyzed.
- This account was designed to produce faith. Though Mark does *not* have the same sort of purpose statement that we find in John 20, what we witness in this account nevertheless *parallels* that purpose statement. John stated that the signs he recorded were done in order to produce faith, a faith that would lead to eternal life. (cf. Jn 20.30-31)
- Mark, and *all* of the gospel writers, did just that. They recorded the *miracles* of Jesus — and the *teachings* of Jesus — and they did so in order to create *faith* in the minds of the *next generation* of hearers, those who would *not* have the privilege of seeing *firsthand* what Jesus did. They *could* and they *would*, though, come to the *same* degree of faith, as those who were eyewitnesses. (cf. Lk 1.1-4)
- Immediately prior to John's purpose statement in John 20.30-31, we learned that Thomas *refused* to believe the *credible* testimony of his fellow apostles. Remember, his fellow apostles *also refused* to believe the credible testimony of the women at the tomb *and* the men en route to Emmaus, all of whom actually saw the resurrected Christ. Thomas wanted *more* evidence. He wanted to *personally see* the resurrected Jesus. After Thomas had the opportunity to do so, we read this: "Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'" (Jn 20.29)
- Thomas was blessed, because Thomas got to see the resurrected Lord in the flesh and, in so doing, come to faith. But that's not all that Jesus taught. Jesus taught that *exactly* the same kind of faith would come to those who, though not privileged to see what Thomas saw, could *still* come to believe in Jesus as the son of God. They did so by means of credible testimony conveyed to them by eyewitnesses just like Thomas.
- *Nothing* that Jesus said indicated any difference in the degree/in the nature, of faith on the part of Thomas, who saw Jesus, versus those "who have *not* seen and yet have believed." Both faith *with* sight and faith *without* sight were rooted in the same truth, namely the *historical reality* of the resurrection of Jesus, a resurrection that was *witnessed*, according to 1 Corinthians 15, by hundreds of first century men and women.
- What's *the* message that we can glean from this account in Mark? We recognize that the response of these first-century eyewitnesses — namely the fact that they were *amazed* and *astonished* demonstrates *then* — *and* demonstrates *now* — that they were *not* just gullible ready-to-believe-anything onlookers. What Jesus *said* and what Jesus *did* caught their attention, and what Jesus *said* and what Jesus *did* made them believers. They did *not just* believe because they *wanted* to

believe. They believed *because* the evidence convinced them that Jesus was more than just another man. They came to faith because of the signs — the miracles, the teaching and the preaching — that was openly demonstrated in their presence.

- That's what the written word was designed to do. It was designed, in large measure, to *duplicate* the truths that were *initially* conveyed in *real* life — in *real* life settings — in this context, in the *very real life* of Jesus the Christ, who lived, who taught and who died nearly 2000 years ago. The *overwhelming* and *substantial* evidence of the *historicity* — and thus the *veracity* — that's the *truthfulness* — of the biblical text *confirmed then* and *confirms now* that these events *really* took place as they are described. And the faith they yielded *then, remains possible even today*.

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