

The Gospel of *Mark*

The Servant Leadership of Jesus

The Servant's Ministry in and around Galilee (cont) (1:14 – 9:50)

God promised Israel disease immunity for obedience to the Mosaic Law ^{Exodus 23:25-26}, but He also warned Israel that disobedience would bring curses ^{Deuteronomy 28:15-22}, including diseases. Jesus' healings were needed because of Israel's sin and reversed the devil's work ^{Acts 10:37-38}.

A Period of Popularity: *Jesus Heals a Paralytic* (2:1-12)

2:1-2 Jesus returned to his home in Capernaum ^{Matthew 4:13}, probably to the house of Simon ^{Mark 1:29}.

Once the news spread, Jesus began to preach the "word" (Good News) to the overflow crowd ^{v.13}.

3-4 A group of at least four men brought a paralyzed man they were concerned about for healing.

However, because of the very crowded conditions, the only way they could get the man in the house to Jesus was (at great effort) by creating an opening in the flat roof and lower him down to Jesus.

Most houses of that time had complex roofs consisting of beams, baked clay, then soft clay.

As with leprosy ^{Mark 1:40-45}, there is symbolism in all of the physical and spiritual healing performed by Jesus. This man's physical paralysis is much like the paralysis of sin ^{Romans 5:6}.

5 Following His observation of the men's faith in Jesus' healing power and compassion for the paralytic, Jesus responded in a way that appears to be contradictory with Christian principles, but illustrated a common first century Jewish belief: there is a direct link between illness and sin ^{Psalms 103:2-3, Isaiah 58:8}.

Jesus told the man his sins were "forgiven" ^{Luke 7:48} ('sent away' ^{Psalms 103:12, Jeremiah 31:14, Micah 7:19}).

The actions of these men displayed a very important Christian principle. They did not simply say to the paralytic: "We will pray for you." (which is a very good thing), but they went further by picking him up and taking him to Jesus. Even more, they took a chance by dismantling part of Simon's roof in order to get the paralytic to Jesus. The powerful evidence of the great faith of these men was their compassionate deed ^{Luke 3:7-11, Galatians 5:6, James 2:14-17, 1 John 3:16-18}.

Principle: Christians (having placed their faith in Jesus) have an enormous responsibility and obligation to bring people into the presence of Jesus, even if it is inconvenient or difficult.

6-7 The curious scribes that were present responded by "thinking" both correct and incorrect thoughts: they knew only God can forgive sins ^{Isaiah 43:25}, but they missed the point that Jesus was/is God.

The teachers were scribes (mostly Pharisees), who were authorities on the Mosaic Law ^{Ezra 7:6}.

As in this situation, God often used both the knowledge of Scripture and the wrong thinking of the Jewish leaders to interrupt the speech and actions of Jesus at times when there was a chance Bible readers might miss the deeper significance of what was happening at the time.

8 The scribes must have been caught off-guard by the next statement from Jesus, because He proved to them He was reading their thoughts ^{Psalms 139:1-4} by questioning them on their unspoken reactions.

This is the first of five clashes between Jesus and Jewish leaders ^{Mark 2:1-12, 13-17, 18-22, 23-28, 3:1-6}.

9 The question by Jesus was not which is easier to "do", but which is easier to "say". In fact, both are impossible for man to "do", but possible for God ^{Mark 10:27}. However, it is much easier to "say" sins are forgiven, because there can be no definitive proof whether there has been true forgiveness or not.

10-12 Jesus told the scribes and all those present that He would prove He was the "Son of Man", who has the power to forgive sins, by "saying" and "doing" the harder of the two actions. Jesus told the paralytic to rise and carry his mat to his home, and because of Jesus' miracle healing power, the man did exactly what Jesus told him to do. However, even though the people had seen Him cure many diseases and expel evil spirits, they were amazed at his complete healing of the paralytic ^{Matthew 9:8}.

The "Son of Man" is a humble Messianic title Jesus applied to Himself fourteen times in Mark and eighty in all the Gospels, and reflects back to the prophetic use in the OT ^{Daniel 7:13-14}.

While the people of Capernaum responded to the healing of the paralytic with amazement, their experience of sensationalism obviously did not change many hearts, because at a later time, Jesus condemned the town for its lack of repentance and sinful condition ^{Matthew 11:23-24}.

A Period of Popularity: *Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew)* (2:13-17)

13 After completing His teaching (both in word and action) to the people at Simon's home, He left and headed to the lake (Sea of Galilee). In time, many people gathered again and Jesus began teaching.

14 As Jesus walked and taught, He saw Levi (Matthew) in a "tax collector's booth". Jesus called to him with a simple message: "Follow me.". Stirred in his heart, Levi answered the call to conversion and discipleship, he quickly got up and went to follow Jesus, leaving "everything" behind ^{Luke 5:28}.

Although there is some debate, there's little doubt Levi and Matthew were the same person, making him the brother of a second disciple named James (also a son of Alphaeus ^{Mark 3:18}).

Levi was a publican: Jews who bought from the Roman government the right to collect taxes. The publicans were rich, because they were allowed to keep any amount collected over what the Romans required. As a result, they were despised (considered traitors) by other Jews.

15 Levi celebrated his decision to follow the Lord by having a feast in his home to honor Jesus ^{Luke 5:29}. Attending the feast were the (soon to be former) friends of Levi, including other publicans and "sinners": a name the Jews had for the people with no regard or respect for the Mosaic Law.

16 Once again, the "scribes of the Pharisees" (lit) saw Jesus' actions as a violation of the Mosaic Law. They questioned the disciples of Jesus, who probably were not sure how to respond, because they had been taught by the experts in the law their whole lives, but had only a short time with Jesus.

17 Jesus responded to the complaints by reminding the scribes that the Messiah's mission (His mission) was to bring salvation to the "sinners" ^{1 Timothy 1:15}. He implied if a person was already "righteous", then they did not need a Savior, so His mission required His relating to (and eating with) the "sick".

The statements of Jesus emphasized the symbolic link between physical & spiritual sickness.

The Pharisees could not accept the depravity of all men ^{Romans 3:10-11, 23}, including themselves, even though it was clearly written in many OT passages ^{2 Chronicles 6:36, Psalm 14:1-3, Ecclesiastes 7:20}.