

The Gospel According to

Mark

*Written and taught by Joe Liana, Pastor, Lighthouse Bible Church
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Mark

Introduction

- 1.) *Each of the four gospels seem to emphasize a different aspect of Jesus Christ, who is the “good news” which they proclaim. Mathew presents Christ the Messiah, fulfiller of prophecy. Luke presents Jesus the Son of Man, while John centers on the deity of Christ and His sayings. The gospel of Mark concentrates on the miracles and the things that Jesus did.*
- 2.) *From this gospel itself along with the other scriptures it is impossible to positively identify the author. Tradition tells us the author was John Mark, cousin of Barnabas, and the companion of both Peter, and later Paul.*
- 3.) *Tradition tells us this gospel is a narrative of the recollections of Peter as to the life and teachings of Christ, however, as Matthew Poole states, we believe these things which come “to us only upon the credit of writers who are said to have wrote what we have of their writings at least three hundred years after Mark’s time.”*
- 4.) *The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of the four gospels. It contains very little new information to the other gospels, however, what he does record is more detailed and descriptive than the other gospels.*
- 5.) *This Gospel is definitely part of the scriptural record of which it is in total agreement. It was inspired by God and therefore “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 2:16)*

v.1:1 *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;*

Mark announces that he will begin his narrative with what he considers the beginning of the gospel or “the good news.” This good news is, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

- a) *That the name of the child born unto Mary would be Jesus was told to Joseph in a dream. The name means “Savior.” (Matt. 1:20-21) Added is the title Christ, (Messiah in Hebrew) which means “Anointed.” (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18-21)*
- b) *Further, Jesus Christ is said by Mark to be the Son of God. Jesus is referred to as such throughout the scriptures and it shows that he in Himself shares in the nature of God.*

v.1:2-3 *As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

Mark, through Old Testament prophecy, introduces John the Baptist. The appearance and preaching of John can rightly be said to be the beginning of the gospel, for John declared plainly for the first time the things that had for so long been hidden. He proclaimed the coming of the Messiah who would fulfill both the prophets and the law.

“But the dispensation of the gospel began with the preaching of John the Baptist. Before his time the doctrine of the gospel was made known to Adam, and Abraham, and David; prophesied by Jacob, Isaiah and several of the prophets; but John was the first in whom those promises and prophecies were fulfilled, the first public and plain preacher of the doctrine of the gospel.” Matthew Poole

- a) *The ministry of John the Baptist is the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1. The Baptist was the messenger of God that prepared the way for Jesus Christ.*
- b) *The second quote is taken from Isaiah 40:3, and has to do with the return of Israel from captivity in Babylon. Envoys would go before advancing armies heralding their approach and preparing the way for them. They would make certain roads were level and obstructions that might slow the advance removed. Isaiah speaks of Jehovah going before Israel and preparing the way for their return.*
- c) *This prophecy has its final fulfillment in John the Baptist who heralded the coming of Christ with the authority of one who represented the advancing army. His mission was prophesied by his father at the child’s circumcision ceremony. (Luke 1:76-77) John also knew he was the fulfillment of the prophecies. (John 1:23) His mission was also confirmed by Christ. (Matt. 11:9-10)*

- d) The phrase “make his paths straight” takes on spiritual significance when applied to John. The “road” he was preparing was the hearts of the people. Getting them ready for the message of Christ so that it would be heard and accepted.

v.1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Mentioning John by name for the first time, and so, himself confirming to his readers that John was the prophesied herald of Christ, Mark states that John specifically carried out his mission by baptizing and preaching in the wilderness.

- a) William Henrickson describes John’s stage as “a vast undulating expanse of barren chalky soil covered with pebbles, broken stones and rocks.” It was a desolate place located between Judea to the west and the Dead Sea to the east.
- b) John’s message was repentance. The word denotes a change of direction and always from the wrong way to the right or from evil to good. It is a new direction for the will and the mind, that is, a turning from sin to holiness.
- c) Such repentance would lead to the forgiveness of sin. The Jews believed that forgiveness was to be found in sacrifice and ritual, but John proclaimed the way to forgiveness was a change of heart. This had been the pleading of God throughout the Old Testament and only such repentance would prepare them for the forgiveness the Messiah would offer. (Isaiah 1:11-18)
- d) Baptism was a rite among the Jews administered to those gentiles converting to Judaism. It was a purification ritual that symbolized a turning from idols to the one true God. The novelty of John’s baptism was that it was administered to Jews. It was looked upon by the religious leaders as a denial of the faith.
- e) The Jew that stepped into the baptismal waters acknowledged that it was not enough to be a “son of Abraham,” but that a drastic change was needed in his approach to God. He placed himself in the company of gentiles!

“By his baptism is not to be strictly understood baptism, but his preaching and doctrine, his whole administration; which is called the baptism of repentance, because repentance was the great thing he preached, a seal of which baptism was to be; the consequent of which was to be the remission of sins, or the argument which he used to press repentance was the remission of sins.” Matthew Poole

v.1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Recognizing the pride and hypocrisy of their religious leaders, the hearts of the multitudes were convicted by the straightforward message of John. To the leaders dismay, the people responded to the teaching of John.

- a) *People from the entire region came to hear John and to submit to his baptism. Even those of Jerusalem, the religious capital of the Jewish nation, came to hear him and to confess their hypocrisy and evil lives.*

Mark does not share with his readers any of the discourses of the Baptist. He was a fiery individual that proclaimed the truth, pointed out hypocrisy, and preached a message of repentance. (Luke 3:7-15)

v.1:6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

As was the wilderness in which he preached, so was the man. He wore clothes made of hair and skin, while eating only the foods that the wilderness provided.

- a) *The idea is that he lived a simple existence, divorced from the world and its practices which he preached against. He stood in contrast to the hypocritical self-indulgent religious leaders of the time. Years earlier the newborn Messiah was not found in the palace of Herrod, but in a stable. Likewise, the start of His ministry would not be heralded from Jerusalem, but from the wilderness.*

v.1:7-8 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Some believed John was the Messiah, however, he openly preached that he was simply the herald of one mightier than himself. For those who believed John the Baptist was a great man, John's description of the "one who was to come" must have filled them with wonder.

- a) *To get the full impact of John's words it must be understood that only a slave, the humblest of servants, would take off his master's sandals. In fact, according to Jewish tradition, this act demonstrated the difference between a disciple and a slave. The disciple would render every service to his master except to untie his sandals.*
- b) *John exalts the majesty of his Master by putting himself in comparison as being below a slave. He was unworthy to render the most menial of tasks for the one who was soon to come! The fact that John was so highly regarded by the people made this an unbelievable statement.*

“But between Christ and the Baptist there was a qualitative difference as between the Infinite and the finite, the Eternal and the temporal, the Original Light of the sun and the reflected light of the moon.”
William Hendriksen

- c) *The comparison of the finite to the Infinite becomes apparent in John’s description of their respective baptism. John baptized with water. It was merely a ritual that was an outward sign of inner repentance. It had no power in itself neither was it a true indication that repentance had indeed occurred.*
- d) *Jesus Christ, on the other hand, would baptize with the Holy Ghost. That this had nothing to do with the water ritual is apparent in that Jesus did not physically baptize. (John 4:2) This was the spiritual baptism of God’s Spirit coming upon and indwelling His people, a baptism that had been prophesied, but as yet could not be understood. (Ez. 36:26-27)*

v.1:9-11 *And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, [saying], Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Mark introduces his readers to Jesus Christ with a short narrative of His baptism by John. Jesus came from the town of Nazereth in the region of Galilee to submit to the baptism of John.

- a) *John did not know who the Messiah was until Jesus approached him in the water. (John 1:31; Matt. 3:14-15) The sign of confirmation to John was the vision of the heavens opened, the Spirit descending upon Jesus, and the voice of the Father. (John 1:33-34)*
- b) *Jesus was not introduced to the people as the Messiah at His baptism. In fact, the significance of the baptism of Jesus was between himself and John. Only Jesus and John were made privy to the descent of the Holy Spirit and the voice from heaven.*

So why would Jesus who was sinless submit to the baptism of repentance? The best answer is that in a very real sense he carried upon himself the sins of the world. (Isaiah 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21) His baptism was a renunciation of all sin as contrary to the truth of God.

The fact that the Spirit came upon him demonstrates that Jesus Christ was a man. He had put aside the attributes of His divine nature and was totally dependent upon the Father. He grew in knowledge and wisdom as the Father provided it. (Luke 2:40, 52) As Hendriksen puts it, he was “in need of, and capable of, being strengthened.” This was the beginning of His ministry and God put His Spirit upon Him in a special way.

v.1:12-13 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Mark gives a very brief account of the temptation of Christ. He basically acknowledges the fact that it did occur. John in his gospel does not mention it at all, while Matthew and Luke provide detailed accounts. (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13)

- a) Immediately after His baptism Jesus proceeded into the wilderness. Having already been told that it was in the wilderness that John baptized, Jesus evidently went to an even more rough and desolate place where He would be totally alone.*
- b) The phrase “the spirit driveth him” seems to indicate that Jesus was compelled to go. As a man Jesus had a free will. One that could be different from that of the Father, but which He always brought into subjection to the Father. (Matt. 26:39) This verse seems to indicate that going into the wilderness alone was not Jesus’ first choice.*
- c) He was in the wilderness for forty days and ate nothing. It was His time of preparation for His ministry. Did Jesus upon hearing the voice and being filled with the Holy Spirit receive the knowledge of exactly who he was and the exact nature of His mission?*
- d) The specific temptations mentioned seem to point in this direction; “If thou be the Son of God,” seems to be asking Him to doubt what he was told; to prove it to himself that he had power and was divinely protected; to exercise that power according to his own will and the will of Satan instead of exercising it according to the will of the Father. (John 8:28)*
- e) Luke’s account seems to suggest that Jesus was tempted constantly during those forty days, the temptations mentioned being the culmination of Satan’s attack. His final attempt seems to show his frustration as he basically pleads, “I’ll give you everything I have and everything I control. Just worship me.”*
- f) Mark mentions the presence of wild beasts probably to show the inhospitableness of the area, but also to show that Christ was divinely protected or that He ruled over nature. He was not attacked by the hyenas, jackals, panthers and lions that roamed this isolated and desolate area.*
- g) After the battle was won angels came and ministered to Him. This “ministering” was probably feeding Him, strengthening Him, and comforting Him. While His temptation shows He was a man, the fact that angels served Him shows He was divine.*

v.1:14-15 *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Between verses 13 and 14 in this chapter of the gospel of Mark about a years time has elapsed. John is the only one of the gospel writers that records the events that took place in the first year of Christ's ministry.

a) *During this year Jesus kept a relatively low profile. For about six months Jesus and His disciples stayed near the Jordan and baptized. Jesus and John seemed to conduct parallel ministries. John was baptizing to the north and on the other side of the Jordan River.*

(John 3:22-24)

b) *The popularity of Jesus increased, while that of John waned. When John was put in prison Jesus went to Galilee. With the fulfillment of the ministry of John, Jesus entered Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.*

The Roman province of Palestine was made up of three regions: Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Jesus was in effect returning home for he grew up in Nazereth, which along with Cana, where the two major cities of the Galilean region.

c) *The Jewish leadership hated John and had finally removed him from the scene. Jesus had become more popular with the people than John, and so, He was their next target. By returning to Galilee it would be more difficult to gain notoriety in His home region and a major confrontation with the Jewish leadership would be less likely. He remains in this region for some sixteen months (Galilean ministry 1:14-7:23)*

d) *The initial message of Jesus was the good news of the kingdom of God, namely, that it was at hand or had arrived. The time was fulfilled, that is, every prophecy uttered by the prophets of God concerning this time had come about. The time appointed by God had arrived. (Dan. 9:25)*

e) *God was "setting up" His kingdom. He would deliver His people and setup His rule. The Jews had been waiting for this for thousands of years. (Dan. 2:44) Most had become skeptical, but all were blinded to the spiritual nature of the kingdom.*

f) *The message of Christ, in view of the coming kingdom, was to repent. In other words, prepare! Change from the old way of doing things, break your old sinful habits, and go in the other direction. Believe the good news that He would preach and expand upon.*

v.1:16-20 *Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting*

a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the [son] of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

The calling of Simon, Andrew, James and John recorded in these verses is actually the second time that they were called. The first time had been about a year earlier shortly after Jesus returned from forty days in the wilderness.

- a) *The initial calling of six of the apostles is recorded in the gospel of John. (John 1:35-45) So these six men at least were “part time” apostles for a year before this “final calling.” They had been at the wedding feast in Cana, saw Jesus cleanse the temple and perform miracles in Jerusalem, and heard Him speak to Nicodemus as well as the woman at the well in Samaria. No wonder they immediately dropped everything to follow Him.*
- b) *And drop everything they did! The impression given is that Simon and Andrew threw their net into the sea and never pulled it in. James and John left their father and in all likelihood a good business. Had Jesus told them of this day? Were they anticipating it?*
- c) *The words of Jesus seem light and witty as he makes a comparison between their current profession and the work that lie ahead of them. He would “make them to become fishers of men.” They were nowhere near ready, but He would train them. They didn’t know what to expect or what lie ahead, but He had impressed them enough that they knew they belonged with Him.*

v.1:21-22 *And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.*

With John the Baptist in prison and at least some of His apostles chosen, the public preaching ministry of Jesus began. He preached in the synagogues in the region of Galilee. He healed the sick, which confirmed the words that He spoke. Large crowds began to follow Him in the region.

- a) *Matthew gives us a summary of what was taking place in Galilee at this time. (Matt. 4:23-25) Luke gives us an account of the unbelief Jesus faced in His home city of Nazereth. (Luke 4:15-21, 28-30)*
- b) *Capernaum was a city in Galilee where Jesus received a warmer welcome. He taught in their synagogue and they were astonished. The word literally means dumbfounded. His teaching was new, both its content and His delivery was something they had not experienced before.*

- c) *The comparison drawn is to the teaching of the scribes. The difference was that Jesus taught with authority. From the scriptures we know that the teachers of this time were divided into factions. They employed human logic and concentrated on trivialities. They viewed themselves as mentally superior and were not hesitant to make the people feel inferior. (Matt. 23:23-24)*
- d) *On the other hand, Jesus spoke the truth. He talked about things of great significance, that is, things that mattered and things that were helpful. He spoke to them with great compassion and with love. As the author of the law and the prophets He made the scriptures come alive, making the seemingly complex, simple. He spoke as God.*

v.1:23-28 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let [us] alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine [is] this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

Mark includes the account of Jesus casting out an unclean or evil spirit in this particular synagogue in Capernaum where He was teaching (Parallel verse: Luke 4:33-36)

- a) *Demon possession, that is, a demon spirit occupying or sharing a human body, and manifesting itself in physical or mental abnormalities was not uncommon in the time of Christ. Demon possession in the scriptures is very real. It was not simply the primitive diagnosis of disease, disabilities or handicaps. The scriptures always distinguish demon possession from illness. (Matt. 4:24, 8:16)*

Does demon possession exist today or was it ended with the death and resurrection of Christ? The opinions of bible scholars vary greatly on this subject. John MacArthur states, "... many people who are diagnosed as mentally ill are actually demonized." William Hendriksen states, "... convincing evidence of present day demon possession has not been furnished. Demons influence, yes; demon possession, not necessarily." Dr. J.D. Mulder states, "I venture to suggest that demon possession was a phenomenon limited almost exclusively (if not entirely) to the period of special divine manifestations during the period in which the New Testament church was born."

- b) *In this particular account it states that the possessed man was a member of the synagogue. Was his possession apparent or did the demon work mischief through the man secretly? It seems that with the appearance of Christ the demon knew that he would be exposed. It is the demon that cries out in fear and protest.*

- c) *Although fearful, the demon's protest seems to indicate that he believed he was doing nothing wrong in possessing the man. The word "us" probably refers to the demon and the man he possessed. Both beings were fallen creatures and the demon seemed to believe that he had the right to possess the man.*
- d) *The demon recognized Jesus as holy and from God. He feared Him and knew of His authority, but it seems that the demon didn't quite know what Jesus was up to. Did He come to destroy the creatures of the fallen realm?*
- e) *Jesus, on the other hand, did not desire the testimony of demons who are led by Satan who is called the deceiver and the father of lies. Their testimony, even if true, had no credibility.*
- f) *Invoking the authority given to him by the Father, Jesus silenced the demon and cast him out of the man. The manner in which the demon left, that is, violently shaking the man and crying out was either the spirit's final protest against Christ, or caused by the torment the creature was subjected to when free of the man's body.*

It appears as though there was some advantage to the demon in possessing a creature of flesh and blood. Was it refuge from torment? (Matt. 8:29-32)

- g) *In the same way that the people were astonished by Christ's teaching, so were they amazed by the manifestation of His power. They had never seen or heard anyone like Jesus Christ. Unlike the Jewish exorcists, Jesus spoke directly to the demon and it obeyed. The people rightly associated this demonstration of power to His teaching.*
- h) *Needless to say, His fame spread throughout all Galilee. His teaching and works were so astounding that it was all people could talk about. He was immediately famous or known throughout the region.*

v.1:29-31 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Upon leaving the synagogue Jesus went to the home of Peter. He was accompanied by James, John, Andrew and Peter. Peter lived in an extended household made up of at least Andrew, his wife and his mother-in-law.

- a) *In Luke's account the fever is described as great, so Peter's mother-in-law was very ill. Luke's account also states the disciples besought or petitioned Jesus in regards to her. Jesus*

immediately responds and heals the woman simply by rebuking the fever, taking her by the hand, and helping her up. (Luke 4:38-39)

- b) The healing is immediate and complete. The ordeal left her with no ill effects whatsoever. She arose and ministered to them (probably preparing food) as if she had never been sick.*
- c) Peter is the only apostle said to have a wife. This story shows that the apostles did not completely abandon their families. It is over a year into Christ's ministry and Peter comes home to his family. Late in his ministry Peter's wife is still with him. (1 Cor. 9:5)*

v.1:32-34 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

It was the Sabbath, so all of those who had heard of the healings that had taken place waited till after the sun had set and traveled to the house of Peter seeking Jesus. The entire city gathered together at Peter's door.

- a) It must be assumed that Jesus healed all of the afflicted. He healed them of many different diseases. The distinction is made between disease and demon possession, for it says that he also cast out many demons.*
- b) The devils were not permitted to speak for they knew who He was. He was trying to keep a relatively low profile at this time in His ministry. It was not yet time to openly proclaim that He was indeed the Messiah. As mentioned earlier, He did not desire the testimony of devils.*

v.1:35-38 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All [men] seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

After at best a few hours of sleep, Jesus wakes up and leaves the house. He goes to a solitary location and seeks the fellowship of His Father in prayer. The gospel writers tell us that Jesus prayed often. Prayer was His link to the Godhead.

- a) Peter, (probably accompanied by Andrew, James and John) when realizing that Jesus had gone out, go searching for him. The word used means "to hunt or to track down." They went out with a great urgency to find him.*

- b) *The message delivered upon finding him is that “all men seek thee.” The crowd had evidently returned to Peter’s home. In fact, it was probably the crowd that awakened him and not finding Jesus panic set in.*
- c) *Instead of returning, Jesus invites them to go with Him to the other cities and towns in the area. Their training has begun. Jesus puts the emphasis on the message He delivered. The miracles were meant to back-up the message. (v. 1:14-15)*

v.1:39-45 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth [his] hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish [it] much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

So leaving the city of Capernaum they traveled throughout Galilee and Jesus preached in all of their synagogues. To confirm His preaching He cast out devils and although not specifically mentioned, healed the sick,

- a) *In one of these towns Jesus was approached by a leper. This probably took place on one of the few occasions that Jesus was not surrounded by a crowd. Most likely it happened when He was traveling between cities for there were strict laws concerning lepers. They had to isolate themselves and announce their approach to everyone.*
- b) *This probably explains the demeanor of the man as he kneels and beseeches Christ in fear, and yet, is driven by faith and hope. He obviously knows about Jesus, but how to get to Him; how to approach Him; he seizes the opportunity that presents itself.*
- c) *He believed Jesus could heal him, but would He heal someone who according to the law was unclean and who had lost all of the privileges of the congregation, and so he says, “If thou wilt.”*
- d) *Jesus was moved with compassion, literally “moved in His inner being.” He genuinely felt the man’s pain. Not only the physical pain, but also his loneliness and shame. The man’s condition stirred up deep emotion in Jesus.*

- e) *The compassion of Jesus is manifested in the words "I will" accompanied by His healing touch. It is interesting to note that it was against the law to touch a leper. Was he healed even before the Savior's touch or considered to already be clean in accordance with His will?*
- f) *Again, the healing is both immediate and complete. He was clean. Jesus makes it very clear to the man that he was to tell no one. He is instructed to go and to offer the proper sacrifices that would pronounce him clean according to the law and re-instate him into the congregation. It appears that the only ones he is to tell are the officiating priests as a testimony of Jesus to them.*

Jesus openly healed many, so why this prohibition? Leprosy seemed to be a special case. As stated above, according to the law the lepers had to isolate themselves. Would they now become bold and seek out Christ making it appear that Jesus was encouraging them to break the law and was Himself unclean because of His dealings with these people? Would this bring more attention to Him than He desired at this time?

- g) *The man blatantly disobeys Jesus and publishes the matter to anyone who would listen. As a result, Jesus couldn't enter the cities, but had to conduct His ministry in the desert. Was it because of the crowds and His popularity or was it because all the lepers were coming to Him so He had to remain in remote places.*

v.2:1-12 And again he entered into Capernaum after [some] days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 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. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 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. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this [man] thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 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? 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? 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,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 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.

Jesus returns to Capernaum which throughout this 18 month Galilean ministry can be viewed as His home base. The time frame “after some days” is vague. He and at least four of His disciples had left to preach in surrounding towns (v.1:38) and now some days later return.

- a) *The cry goes out that Jesus had returned and the crowds once again descend upon the house where Jesus is staying. The house fills up quickly so that people are pressing into the doorway to hear Him preach.*
- b) *The emphasis again is upon His preaching and His word. Many of the individuals there had probably been healed by Him several days earlier and now they came to hear Him preach. They were astonished by His teaching and amazed by His power. (v.1:22,27)*
- c) *As Jesus preached, four men broke through the roof of the house and lowered a paralytic man before Jesus. They could not enter the conventional way because of the crowd, but were determined not to be denied.*
- d) *Jesus was moved by this demonstration of faith. They believed the man would be healed if they could get him in the presence of Jesus, but as Jesus turned His attention to the man they got more than they had bargained for.*
- e) *Jesus tenderly addressed the paralytic and pronounced that the man’s sins were forgiven. It must be noted that the Jews erroneously believed that all sickness and disease were directly tied to sin. Someone who was diseased was shunned not only for their physical defect, but also looked upon as morally or spiritually inferior. (John 9:1-2)*

- f) *Based on the above, did Jesus perceive that this man grieved over his sin? Was it this man's idea to come at all or the idea of those that brought him? Did he feel unworthy and humiliated as he was lowered before Jesus?*
- g) *Matthew's account has Jesus first telling the man to be of good cheer. (Matt. 9:2) The word used means a deep rooted cheer or courage. It's the type of cheer that would result from having a great burden lifted from you, in this case, his sins. It seems to indicate he was worried about his spiritual condition.*
- h) *Another possibility is that the man was simply seeking a healing and that Jesus used the opportunity to confront certain leaders who were present, for the scribes immediately took offense to Jesus' pronouncement.*
- i) *They did not verbalize their objection, but in their hearts felt Jesus guilty of blasphemy, for they rightly believed that only God could forgive sins. They were reasoning in their hearts, that is, pondering or weighing the situation. They still did not know what to make of Jesus.*
- j) *Either having the ability to know men's thoughts or given the ability by His Father in this situation, Jesus asks them why they are reasoning these things in their hearts. In other words, there is no need to reason for the answer is clear cut.*
- k) *He asks them the rhetorical question to which the answer is NO. One was not easier than the other. Their own theology equated sin with sickness. They saw His power to heal. It could not be disputed. He healed all disease and even cast out devils. It was now time for them to begin to come to the logical conclusion.*
- l) *They could not see sins being forgiven, but to prove to them once again that He wielded the power of God, He instructs the paralytic to get up and walk home. Jesus gives Himself the title Son of Man and claims the power to forgive sins. He begins to reveal who exactly He is!*
- m) *The healing is once again immediate and complete. It is as if the man had never been paralyzed. The crowd is again totally amazed. They do equate what they had witnessed to God as they agree that nothing like this had ever happened before.*
- v.2:13 *And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.***
- Jesus leaves the house where he healed the paralytic and heads for the seashore. Whether the people followed Him there or a new crowd assembled we do not know, but at any rate, a large group is again with Him and He teaches them.*

- a) *A man who could heal any disease and cast out demons, who's words astonished and amazed its hearers; it follows that anywhere Jesus went crowds gathered and followed Him. It must have been nearly impossible for Jesus to be alone, and yet, He was always ready to accommodate, for that is why He came. (v.1:38)*

v.2:14-17 *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. 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. 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? 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.*

Still walking along the seashore, Jesus comes to the receipt of custom or simply a kind of toll booth. It was where a Roman tax on imports and exports from the provinces was collected. The tax collector would charge above and beyond what was required and so had the reputation of being an extortionist.

- a) *A Jew in this position was additionally viewed as a traitor for he amassed great wealth at the expense of his own people while working for an oppressive government. Levi, or Matthew as he is more commonly known, was such an individual. Although despised, he was probably a man of wealth and power.*
- b) *Jesus instructs Matthew to "follow Him" and Matthew immediately complies. Luke's account states that he "left all." (Luke 5:27-28) The impression is given that just as Peter and Andrew had simply dropped their net, so Matthew leaves the money on the table, the books open, and simply walks away.*
- c) *If this was indeed Matthew's first encounter with Jesus, then this may be one of the most spectacular callings of an apostle second only to Paul. Jesus went out, found Matthew and called him. Obviously Matthew was more concerned about his spiritual condition than was apparent because of the work he did and the position he held. He must have at least known of Jesus and responded to His invitation without a second thought.*
- d) *Luke's account states that Matthew made a great feast in his own home in Jesus' honor. (Luke 5:29) It must have been announced right after his calling for Mark's account says that many publicans and sinners followed him to the house where they sat down for a meal.*
- e) *The main point of the story is to point out the growing opposition of the Pharisees and*

religious leaders to Jesus. Probably as the evening was coming to an end, the religious leaders who most likely remained outside gossiping among themselves the entire time, asked the disciples of Jesus why He (they) ate with tax collectors and sinners.

- g) Jesus, knowing or hearing what was going on, Himself responds to them. Using what may have been a proverb of that day, Jesus informs them that He associates with the individuals He does as a doctor associates himself with the diseased. They are the ones that have need of His services and He readily ministers to them.
- h) Jesus adds that His mission is to call sinners to repentance. He did not come to call the righteous, that is, the self-righteous; those who believed themselves worthy, deserving, and better than others. Jesus is rebuking them, but in their blindness they cannot see.

The leaders believed that Jesus should have come and associated Himself with them. In by-passing the leadership and going directly to the people they were filled with jealousy and suspicion. Here Jesus is basically telling them that if they refuse to condescend to the very people that Jesus came to call, then how can they be included. They were blind in their self-righteousness.

v.2:18-22 *And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.*

It is possible that this is a continuation of the conversation above, but most likely it is a separate instance included by Mark that is merely related to the above to show the questioning and criticism Jesus was beginning to experience at the hands of the religious leaders.

- a) Mark shows us the progression of the early stages of the opposition to Jesus. First, they reasoned within themselves, then, they approached His disciples, now, they boldly question Jesus Himself.
- b) The Pharisees fasted twice a week, a practice which was evidently continued or adopted by the disciples of John the Baptist. The only fast required by the law was on the day of atonement, however, the self-righteous Pharisees used it as a means to manifest their supposed dedication and holiness. (Luke 18:11-12) As to the disciples of John, their motives were probably proper,

their fasting being tied to their repentance or simply a conforming to the life of John.

- c) *The question put to Jesus, "Why do we fast and you and your disciples don't?" They are questioning His lifestyle according to their perception of what constitutes dedication and holiness. Jesus is doing all these amazing and wonderful things, but He is not conforming to the religious norm.*
- d) *Jesus compares His time on earth to a wedding feast, He being the groom and His disciples the groom's attendants. It is now the time to feast for who would take part in a wedding and fast? The time will come however, when the groom will depart and His attendants will go back to their own lives.*
- e) *The example was easy to understand, but the people could not know at this time exactly how this example applied to Jesus and His disciples. With the phrase "shall be taken from them," He predicts His death. His exit will be forceful and sudden. At this time even His disciples did not understand these things.*
- f) *Jesus continues by citing two everyday examples, that is, things they all knew and could relate to from their everyday lives. The examples of the cloth and the wineskins show that His doctrines were fresh and new. They were incompatible with the "old ways" they were used to. By "old ways" is not meant the teaching of the Old Testament, but how it had come to be interpreted; their traditions, perceptions and judgments. His teachings could not be incorporated into this framework.*

"The main lesson conveyed is that the new order of things which Jesus by His coming had ushered in, bringing healing to the sick, liberation to the demon-possessed, freedom from care to the care-ridden, cleansing to lepers, food for the hungry, restoration to the handicapped, and above all salvation to those lost in sin, does not fit into the old mold of man-ordained fasting." Hendrikson.

v.2:23-28 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

The leaders did not only take exception with the non-compliance of Jesus to their rules concerning fasting, but also with what they viewed as a disrespecting of the Sabbath. Once again this story

is probably not in chronological order, but included here by Mark as an illustration of the growing opposition of the leadership against Jesus.

- a) *Jesus and His disciples were walking on a road or a path that went through a corn field. Being hungry, they picked some ears of corn as they walked and obviously ate it. According to the law the act itself was allowed as long as they did not use a sickle.
(Deut. 23:25) The problem arose not because they took the corn, but because it was the Sabbath.*
- b) *The law forbid work on the Sabbath. (Deut. 5:12-14) However, in defining the law, the rabbis listed thirty-nine forbidden works. Each of the thirty-nine was divided into six categories, so they had 234 "works" one couldn't do! Picking or reaping was one of them.*
- c) *The Pharisees directly confront Jesus. Although Mark puts it in question form, it is definitely an accusation leveled against Jesus and the disciples. They are basically saying, "Look what they are doing! It is not lawful! You are breaking the law!"*
- d) *Jesus reminds the Pharisees of an incident that took place in the Old Testament. David and his companions were hungry and were given the sacred bread out of the sanctuary which according to the law was only to be eaten by the priests. This instance shows that need superceded the law.*
- e) *Jesus continues to instruct them reminding them that man was created first and the Sabbath day was then instituted for the good of man. Their interpretations now had men serving the Sabbath instead of the Sabbath serving man.*
- f) *In conclusion, it follows that since the Sabbath was made for man, then the Son of Man or the head of all men rules over the Sabbath. It is Jesus who holds the proper interpretation or has the final say in laying down the principles that govern the day.*
- g) *With the phrase "have ye read" Jesus is putting down the Pharisees who considered themselves experts when it came to the scriptures. They were proud arrogant men and to have one who was not of their ranks telling them what the scriptures meant, and so, besting them in their own area of expertise, angered and frustrated them to no end. Further adding fuel to the fire was Jesus' claim of authority over them. (John 9:34)*