

# The Gospel of Mark 2

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Updated 1/24/2023 Printed 3/12/2023

## Introduction:

We quote from the commentary by **DeWelt** and **Johnson** to open chapter two:

The return to Capernaum and the healing of the paralytic followed, after a short period, the history of which is not recorded, the healing of the leper. The incident narrated in this text occurred at the close of our Lord's first missionary circuit of Galilee. His labors were now devoted to this northern district of Palestine, where prejudices and bigotry were not so intense as in Judea.

He was now at the most popular period of his earthly ministry, He had shown his divine power by many miracles, healing the nobleman's son at Capernaum, bringing myriads of fish to the disciples' net on the Sea of Tiberias, and restoring the demoniac in the synagogue. Though rejected at Nazareth, he was received with honor at Capernaum,

His teachings, whether on the hill top, or beside the lake, or in the house of worship, were heard by wondering throngs, and his steps throughout Galilee were attended by multitudes, drawn by the fame of his miracles and the fascination of his words. The Pharisees and leaders, though suspicious, were not yet openly his enemies, and the unthinking masses followed him with blind expectation of a new Judean kingdom which was to transform the Romans at once from masters to slaves, and bend the world in homage.

Just at this hour occurred two significant miracles: the one silently asserting Jesus as superior to all ceremonial regulations, the other calmly claiming for him the divine prerogative of forgiving sin.

**(2:1) When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that He was back home.**

- Somewhere in the back story, Jesus settled in **Capernaum**. In the previous chapter, the demon called Him *Jesus of Nazareth* (1:23), so this was a recent move.

**(2) Soon the house where He was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door.**

- **Barclay** says of life in Palestine:

Life in Palestine was very public. In the morning the door of the house was opened and anyone who wished might come out and in. The door was never shut unless a man deliberately wished for privacy; an open door meant an open invitation for all to come in.

So, in no time, a crowd had filled the house to capacity and jammed the pavement round the door; and they were all eagerly listening to what Jesus had to say.

- While we cannot be sure, the house probably belonged to Simon Peter. It was a larger home with ample space for guests. This raises the question about how a fisherman from lowly Bethsaida acquired a spacious home in Capernaum.

Peter may have married a lady from Capernaum and he and his brother Andrew moved there. His wife's father may have died, and he became the male figure in charge of the property while his wife's mother continued to live with the family. We will revisit this house later in the story. It can be seen in the photograph of Capernaum in chapter one.

One other possibility was that the house was occupied by His mother and His younger brethren. We favor Peter's house.

## STANDING ROOM ONLY

**(2b) While He was preaching God's word to them, (3) four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat.**

- The purpose of Jesus **was to preach God's word**, but the possibility of experiencing a healing was in the background. Jesus had healed at other times. So four men arrived carrying one of their friends on a **mat**.

**(4) They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above His head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus.**

- These friends were determined, so they cut a **hole** in the **roof** over the **head of Jesus** and **lowered down** the **man** on the **mat**. This was certainly an unusual sermon interruption.
- **Digging a hole in the roof** raises questions. Scottish **William Barclay** addresses this concern:

The roof of a Palestinian house was flat. It was regularly used as a place of rest and of quiet, and so usually there was an outside stair which ascended to it. The construction of the roof lent itself to what this ingenious four proposed to do.

The roof consisted of flat beams laid across from wall to wall, perhaps three feet apart. The space in between the beams was filled with brushwood packed tight with clay. The top was then marled over. Very largely the roof was of earth and often a flourishing crop of grass grew on the roof of a Palestinian house.

It was the easiest thing in the world to dig out the rifting between two of the beams; it did not even damage the house very much, and it was easy to repair the breach again. So the four men dug out the filling between two of the beams and let their friend down direct at Jesus' feet.

**(5) Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven."**

- Surprisingly, **Jesus** spoke of the **faith** of the four rather than the man on the mat. There may have been a connection between his **paralysis** and **sins** in his past. Not everyone was happy with the forgiveness as Mark points out next. Notice that a healing has not yet happened.
- Jesus could **see** the **faith** of the four. We need to get our **faith** into everyday life so it can be seen by others rather than quietly locked away so it does not create conflict.

### **JESUS IS CHARGED WITH BLASPHEMY**

**(6) But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, (7) "What is He saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"**

- **The teacher of religious law** were correct that **only God can forgive sins**. So Jesus was asserting that He was **God**. These upper crust religious experts could not imagine that this itinerant preacher of Galilee was Deity, because He hadn't come from their circles and He had fishermen for His disciples. They expected a Messiah to come with an army and drive out the dreaded Romans and their constant taxes but this man didn't fit their fictitious picture. Now He's claiming to **forgive sins**.

**(8) Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so He asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts?"**

- **Jesus knew what they were thinking**. They must have been astounded that He could identify their thoughts. He framed a question that should make them see the truth.

**(9) Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'? (10) So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, (11) "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"**

- Jesus presented His Jerusalem critics with a dilemma:

**Which is easier,**

- to forgive sins
- or heal?

So He proved His power to **forgive sins** by healing the **paralyzed man**.

Mark presents Jesus as a man of *action*. He identified Himself as the **Son of Man** (from Daniel 7) and demonstrated His authority: He healed the **paralyzed man**.

**(12) And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"**



- More action: **jumped, grabbed, walked**.
- The onlookers **praised God**. (Probably not including the teachers.)
- There was no time for the healed man to gather strength, to regain his balance or to visit a physical therapist. He **walked**, carrying his bed.

### **DINNER AT LEVI'S HOUSE**

**(13) Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to Him.**

- **Jesus** was a popular proclaimer by now. **The crowds were coming to Him**.

**(14) As He walked along, He saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow Me and be My disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed Him.**

- **Levi** here is Matthew in some other Gospel accounts. He was a turncoat to the conquered Jewish nation. He was a Jewish **tax collector** for the government of occupation. **Tax collectors** mingled freely with Gentiles and were ritually unclean. They were viewed as "sinners" and excluded from the synagogues, yet **Jesus** invited him to be in His inner circle of men who were later named as apostles.

Look at how his story turned out. God used Matthew **Levi** to write a Gospel designed specially for male Jewish readers.

- Luke 6:15 identifies James as the son of **Alphaeus**. That would make **Levi** and James to be brothers.

**(15) Later, Levi invited Jesus and His disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.)**

- **Levi**, himself a **tax collector**, invited many of his social group to a dinner honoring **Jesus and His disciples**. By now **Jesus** had followers beyond the group of Twelve that He was building. Mark wants his readers to know that **Jesus** was respected by a diverse group of **people**. If Jesus had the authority to forgive the man let down through the roof, He had the right have dinner with sinners who were aware of their need.

**(16) But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw Him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked His disciples, "Why does He eat with such scum? "**

- As we have learned from **Mr. Barclay** at verse 2, the doors were open all day for anyone to stop in and see what was happening. The **Pharisees**, following their own practice, raise the question of why Jesus would dine with such **scum**. Jesus was trying to win people and the **Pharisees** were isolating themselves from these **sinners**. That way they could keep clean. Their group title means "separated ones."

**(17) When Jesus heard this, He told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor -- sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."**

- **Jesus** responded to these holier-than-thou types with a simple figure of speech. He had come to help those who know they are **sinners**, unlike His critics.

## “WHY DON'T YOUR DISCIPLES FAST?”

**(18) Once when John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why don't Your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?"**

- **Fasting** was common to the **disciples of John** as well as the **Pharisees**. These rather opposite groups questioned **Jesus** about why His **disciples** didn't skip food to show their devotion to God as well. **Jesus** was feasting when His critics thought that He should be **fasting**.
- The only prescribed **fast** in the Old Testament was the day of Atonement. With this one exception, fasting developed from their Jewish traditions and not from obedience to Scripture. The Pharisees fasted twice each week according to Luke 18:12. On Thursday they fasted in memory of Moses going up the Mountain to receive the Law and on Monday, they fasted in memory of the ancient Lawgiver descending with the Law.
- **Jesus** not only had a response but made a teaching time out of the event as well.

### ANSWER NUMBER ONE

**(19) Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them. (20) But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.**

- **Jesus** sees His ministry as celebrating a **wedding** and He is **the groom**. It is time for feasting and not fasting. That comes later when **the groom** is **taken away**. So no **fasting** when Jesus was present.

### ANSWER NUMBER TWO

**(21) "Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.**

- A new word picture is introduced. A person patching **old clothing**



with a **new cloth**.

### ANSWER NUMBER THREE

**(22) "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins."**

- **Jesus** completes His response to the fasting question with a third word picture from everyday life. One does not put **new wine** (which will expand as it ferments) into an old (and therefore already stretched) **wineskin**. That would lead to the destruction of both the **wine** and the **wineskin**.



Incidentally **new wine** must be grape juice.

- Jesus taught with brevity and His points convinced. Too much explanation leads to reduced understanding and impact on the listener. This is an underlying principle in writing these notes.

### SABBATH DAY ENCOUNTER IN A FIELD

**(23) One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grainfields, His disciples began breaking off heads of grain to eat. (24) But the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look, why are they breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?"**



- The disciples of **Jesus** wanted something to eat, so they took it. This is allowed by the Law of Moses. The **Pharisees** were critical because it was the **Sabbath** and so the **disciples** were **breaking the law** (as the Pharisees interpreted it). These leaders were tagging along to find something wrong with **Jesus**.
- Now the Morality Police had four charges against the disciples of Jesus:



1. They were reaping.
2. They were threshing.
3. They were winnowing.
4. They were preparing food.

All of this on the **Sabbath** day. Four violations of the **Sabbath** in one mouthful!

**David Guzik** reports these rules that were created by the **Pharisees**:

Ancient Rabbis taught that on the Sabbath, a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder. But you could carry something with the back of your hand, with your foot, with your elbow, or in your ear, your hair, or in the hem of your shirt, or in your shoe or sandal.

Or, on the Sabbath, you were forbidden to tie a knot - except a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So, if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, you could not tie a rope to the bucket, but a woman could tie her girdle to the bucket!

**(25) Jesus said to them, "Haven't you ever read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? (26) He went into the house of God (during the days when Abiathar was high priest) and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his companions."**

- Jesus defends His disciples with a well-known incident from 1 Samuel 21:

**David went to the town of Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he saw him. "Why are you alone?" he asked. "Why is no one with you?" "The king has sent me on a private matter," David said. "He told me not to tell anyone why I am here. I have told my men where to meet me later. Now, what is there to eat?"**

Give me five loaves of bread or anything else you have." "We don't have any regular bread," the priest replied. "But there is the holy bread, which you can have if your young men have not slept with any women recently." "Don't worry," David replied. "I never allow my men to be with women when they are on a campaign. And since they stay clean even on ordinary trips, how much more on this one!" Since there was no other food available, the priest gave him the holy bread -- the Bread of the Presence that was placed before the LORD in the Tabernacle. It had just been replaced that day with fresh bread. (1 Samuel 21:1-6 NLT)

- David and his companions **broke the law** by **eating sacred loaves** meant only for **the priests**.

(27) Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. (28) So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"

- **J.W. McGarvey** makes this observation:

He is clear on this occasion that said law was not to be construed as to prevent men from providing necessary food on the Sabbath day.

So **Jesus** is saying that people's needs take priority over the need to keep the **Sabbath**. Normally, keeping the **Sabbath** allows a day off for man and his beast and that is for his benefit. But in this case His disciples need for food takes priority. And He can say that because He is the **Lord** and in charge of everything.

## Four Portraits of Jesus Christ

<p><b>Matthew</b> For Jewish Men (1:1-2).</p>	<p><b>Jesus: Messiah and King</b> (1:1, 2:1-2; 21:5) Key word: <i>Fulfilled</i> (16 in KJV)</p>
<p><b>MARK</b> For readers unacquainted with O.T. or Jewish customs. He quotes O.T. just once.</p>	<p><b>Jesus, Sacrificial Servant</b> (10:45) Key word : <i>immediately</i> (17 KJV)</p>
<p><b>Luke</b> For Gentile Believers (1:3) Uses O.T. profusely.</p>	<p><b>Jesus, Savior of all Mankind</b> (19:10) Key word: <i>Son of Man</i> (27 KJV)</p>
<p><b>John</b> For Everyone. <small>By Charles Dailey 2023</small></p>	<p><b>Jesus, Divine Son of God</b> (1:1, 14; 20:31) Key word: <i>Believe</i> (46 KJV)</p>