

MARK

Lesson 2 w/Answers

Mark Chapter 2

In the course of this lesson, we will be examining four stories in Mark's second chapter that add further insight into Jesus' ministry—and how it was misunderstood by so many early in his ministry. Having returned to Capernaum from his preaching trip along the shores of Galilee, Jesus continues to be surrounded by large crowds of people. This chapter again opens at Peter's home in Capernaum. The remaining ruins of his home, close to the synagogue in Capernaum, can still be seen there today.

To provide a little more insight into the type of home that someone wealthy might have owned during the time of Jesus, I am including two pictures of a wealthy man's home from that period; specifically, they are pictures of his mosaic patio overlooking the water. Here, he would have hosted many parties for the wealthy elite of his day. This particular home is off the coast of Israel overlooking the Mediterranean, however it gives us a good idea of what the tax collector's home may have looked like off the sea of Galilee when Jesus visited with him.



To add even further texture to our study, I have also included pictures depicting what a typical two-story "working-class" home during the time of Peter would have looked like. With a roof made of wattle and daub (a thick thatch covered in a plaster-like material), it is evident how easy it would have been to climb to the roof, make a hole, and drop a paralytic man through the ceiling, down to where Jesus was teaching. The art is by the artist Balage. These two depictions give us a good perspective on the differing lifestyles of the wealthy and the working class of Jesus' day.



With this background, let's read Mark Chapter 2 and consider the following questions:

1. We come now to a familiar story: the lowering of the paralytic man by his friends through Peter's roof so that Jesus would heal him. Read Mark 2:2-12. Note that it indicates that such a large crowd had crammed into the house, that everyone else pressing in to hear Jesus teaching had to remain out in the streets. In the crowd were a variety of people from all around the area, and it included a particular class of Jews. Which special group in particular had managed to get all the way inside the home so that they could sit and hear Jesus?
 - a. ANSWER: Verse six tells us that "some teachers of the law were sitting there." I think that sometimes we forget that many different kinds of people followed Jesus to hear him teach, and often it included the Scribes and Pharisees of the day. This was indeed the case when Jesus forgave the paralytic of his sins. The large crowds were drawing everyone toward Jesus, and the Scribes and Pharisees were not about to be left out; they wanted to hear his teaching as well.
2. On what basis did Jesus forgive the paralytic of his sins, and what does this indicate regarding our involvement in bringing people to Christ?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Jesus forgave the paralytic based on the faith of his friends, the people who had done all they could do to get the man to Jesus for healing. Jesus realized that what the man needed most was forgiveness of his sins, and based on their faith he forgave the paralytic.
 - b. ANSWER 2: This also clearly demonstrates that it is our great responsibility, as believers, to seek to reach those we love for Jesus, no matter what it takes. Imagine if his friends had simply abandoned him and went instead with the crowd to hear Jesus? We are called to find the lost, i.e., to seek Jesus' "lost lambs," and these men had done just that.
3. Why were the teachers of the law so upset that Jesus had forgiven the man? Were they concerned that what the paralytic needed was healing, and Jesus wasn't healing him?
 - a. ANSWER: Full of righteous indignation, and not caring about the man being healed at all, they primarily reacted to Jesus acting as God and forgiving the man's sins. They were upset that Jesus was putting himself on the same level as God.
4. How did Jesus react to the righteous indignation of the teachers of the law? Did he lash out at their ignorance?
 - a. ANSWER: Jesus realized how short-sighted they were and chose to now use the paralytic man to teach these teachers a very important doctrine: Jesus was sent by God and had been given all authority on earth, including the authority to forgive sins; and he wanted everyone to know it. With that, he healed the man, and "everyone" was amazed and "they praised God, saying, 'we have never seen anything like this!'"
5. Having demonstrated that he had the power to forgive sins, and to heal, Jesus left Peter's home and walked along the lake, i.e., the Sea of Galilee. Large crowds continued to follow him and listen to his teaching. As he walked along, he came upon Levi the tax collector; we know him today as the gospel-writer, Apostle Matthew. Despised by the Jews, tax collectors like Levi often used fraudulent practices and gained great personal wealth as a result. Making them even more unlikable was the fact that these tax collectors directly served and reported into Herod Antipas, a corrupt leader in his own right. What was Levi's immediate reaction when Jesus asked Levi to follow him? (see Mark 2:13-17)
 - a. ANSWER: Without question or second thought, Levi immediately "got up and followed him."
6. Jesus now has five named disciples, and all of them are invited to Levi's home for a large dinner gathering. Who else does Levi invite to this dinner?
 - a. ANSWER: Levi had also invited many of his associates, other tax collectors, and his friends— who were all "sinners" in the eyes of the Pharisees; they were not educated in the law, and they did not live by the Pharisees' rigorous standards. We also see that Jesus was allowed to bring in all of the disciples that had been following him, not just the five named so far. Clearly Levi was a wealthy man who could host such large dinner.
7. While eating dinner at Levi's with the other tax collectors, disciples, and "sinners;" the Pharisees drop by to see what the party is all about, and they ask his disciples "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answers for them; what is his response? Why does he mention the righteous in his answer?
 - a. ANSWER: Jesus is clear that his mission is to save the lost, not the righteous. He came for the sinners, i.e., those in need of repentance and a savior. His reference to the "righteous" is directed clearly at the Pharisees who believed they were righteous and not in need of repentance or a savior. Today, as we witness for Christ, we can still come across people like this—believing that they are above it all, and that their good works will be sufficient to get them into heaven.
8. In Mark 2:18-21, Jesus points out something the that disciples had never considered: that Jesus was the "bridegroom." If that is so, then why should the disciples not be fasting? Why were they excluded from this?
 - a. ANSWER: Jesus was telling them that no one fasted during the time that the bridegroom was with them, but a time was coming when the bridegroom would be taken away, and then they would fast.

9. Following his teaching on the bridegroom, Jesus uses a second illustration to demonstrate that the old ways of Jewish tradition were no longer going to work. You could not bring together their tradition and the new Gospel of Jesus, since merging the two together would never work. How does he characterize what this would look like?
- a. ANSWER: Jesus used something common that everyone present would understand: a wineskin. Wine, when it was first made, was placed in wineskins while it fermented. Over time, this wineskin would become weakened in the process. Putting brand new wine in an old wineskin never worked, as the fermenting process would cause the old wineskin to burst, and the wine to pour out before its time. Jesus wanted them to recognize that the Gospel, the New Covenant, would be put in new wineskins, and would not follow the old Jewish traditions and teachings.
10. As Mark's second chapter closes, we once again see Jesus moving through the Galilean countryside, followed by large crowds, including the Pharisees. As we observe in yet another example, the Pharisees are still judging by their standards; as they question Jesus about his disciples picking grain to eat on the Sabbath. What was Jesus' response to the Pharisees, and how does it apply to us as well? (see Mark 2:23-28)
- a. ANSWER 1: Jesus replied that, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." In another words, God made the Sabbath for man to rest and worship, but God did not make it for man to load upon it a bunch of man's rules and laws with which to burden God's people.
- b. ANSWER 2: This applies to us as well. We need to keep the Sabbath holy, i.e., to worship God and to rest; that's what the Sabbath was created for. Today, followers of Christ set aside Sunday as our Sabbath; but the same practice should apply to us: rest and worship should be the order of the day. Similarly, we should ensure that we do not lay on so many of man's ideas and rules that the Sabbath becomes burdensome and takes away from our worship of God. This is what had happened with the Pharisees. They were so focused on the burden of following all of the laws that the Pharisees had laid down regarding the Sabbath, that it was almost impossible to actually worship God, the creator of the Sabbath.

As we move through our study of Mark and begin to see Christ's ministry and Gospel unfold, we need to be careful that we do not fail to see the truths that can be applied to our lives today. Let's be on guard and make sure that, in our zeal for studying God's Holy Word, that we do not become like the Pharisees. Instead, let's keep our eyes on the Cross and eagerly look for the day when Jesus will once again return. What a day that will be!

In Christ,

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