

## Mark 2

### Jesus has unique authority

#### Previously...

Mark has described Jesus as the Son of God and begun to reveal evidence to support this fact. Thus, Jesus is preceded by John the Baptist, a significant prophet, who identifies Jesus as superior to himself while the Father and the Holy Spirit also affirm him. Jesus demonstrates his superlative authority in the desert and proclaims and initiates the Kingdom of God. He chooses disciples – who follow him immediately, removes a demon with ease, heals many and casts out other demons. Clearly, he is the Son of God and he deserves to be followed. The following overview helps illustrate how Mark continues to reveal the supreme status of Jesus although this will result in conflict because religious leaders are increasingly uncomfortable about Jesus' acts and claims:-

#### Jesus reveals his authority by...

- **forgiving sin and healing the paralysis of a man** 2:1-12
- **calling Levi, a tax collector to be his disciple** 2:13-14
- **eating with sinners** 2:15-17
- **determining whether it was appropriate to fast or not** 2:18-22
- **deciding what was permissible activities on the Sabbath** 2:23-28

Read chapter 2 before exploring the following verses which represent key elements in understanding main themes of the chapter.

#### Jesus forgives sin and heals the paralysis of a man (2:1-12)

*Notice how Mark draws attention to the fact that Jesus is preaching again (2:2, 13).*

Put yourself in the place of each of the following – (i) those listening to Jesus, (ii) the four carrying the man, (iii) the man himself and (iv) the owner of the house as the roof was being removed? What do you think each would have been feeling?

(i)

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(ii)

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(iii)

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(iv)

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*The roof of such a home was flat and composed of a few beams laid one way with branches, clay and earth laid across them.*

Why does Jesus forgive the man's sins first, before healing him?

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*There is no suggestion that Jesus forgave any sin that may have caused the paralysis - nowhere does Jesus unambiguously identify personal sin as causing sickness.*

What does it mean that Jesus "saw their faith"?

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*Faith in Mark is generally associated with the belief that Jesus could function miraculously (5:34, 36; 9:23-24; 10:52).*

Given that the man does not request his sins to be forgiven, what does this reveal to you about the authority of Jesus?

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*The purpose of the healing is to demonstrate that Jesus has authority not only to heal but also to forgive sins, significant insofar as many present would have assumed that the man's paralysis would have been due to sin in his life. Jesus can forgive sins even in the absence of confession of sins.*

Why do the Scribes react as they do in 2:7? Did Jesus blaspheme?

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*The Scribes were skilled in copying and interpreting the OT and are referred to as lawyers, teachers and Rabbis. They had many responsibilities including circumcising babies, teaching in schools, drawing up marriage agreements, and were involved in legal and civil aspects of society. They were keen to apply the Jewish law and to interpret it as carefully as possible, though they often disagreed as to how this should be done. Their main aspiration was to determine lawful and unlawful behaviour. The Talmud is the eventual fruit of their thinking and study, the most important version being produced in written form around 500 AD. You can read it at [www.halakhah.com](http://www.halakhah.com) where you will see that it offers many questions and even more answers in an attempt to apply the OT Law. The Scribes are the most likely people to note any acts or teaching of Jesus that would have undermined their laws and practices.*

How would you answer Jesus' question in 2:9?

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*Jesus is being very clever in his question. Many Jews believed that sickness resulted from personal sin. Therefore, to heal sickness meant that the sin that had apparently caused it must have been forgiven; to validate a declaration of the forgiveness of sins would have been achieved by the sickness being removed. In other words, both options offered by Jesus are similar in that they depend on each other, at least in their thinking. The Scribes could do neither but Jesus demonstrates that he can do both.*

What does the story reveal about Jesus' authority?

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*Notice that Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man. This is a term used to refer to fragile humanity (Ezek. 2:1; 3:1; 4:1). However, on the lips of Jesus, it is more likely that he is referring to its use in Daniel 7:13-14, where the Son of Man is given, by God, an everlasting, indestructible kingdom. The Jews used this term as a synonym for Messiah. Jesus is identifying himself as the Son of Man not to identify his humanity but to affirm his role as Messiah. However, the Jews did not expect that Messiah would have the authority to forgive sins and in doing so, Jesus identifies that he has greater prestige even than Messiah; he functions with the forgiving authority of God himself.*

How would you have felt if you had been (i) the man who was healed and forgiven, (ii) the Scribes, and (iii) the onlookers?

(i)

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(ii)

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(iii)

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**Verse for Meditation**

*2:14b - ...and he (Jesus) said to him (Matthew), "Follow me."  
And he rose and followed him.*

<b>SPEAK</b>	<b>the verse out loud, three times, slowly</b>
<b>PRONOUNCE</b>	<b>each word, one at a time</b>
<b>PARAPHRASE</b>	<b>the verse by putting it in your own words</b>
<b>POSE</b>	<b>questions of the verse – why, what, how...?</b>
<b>APPLY</b>	<b>it personally and practically</b>

**Personal questions**

What lesson can I learn from these verses?

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What truth concerning Jesus can I apply to my life this week?

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**Prayer:**

*Lord, thank you for your readiness to reveal yourself to me, especially with reference to your authority and power. Please help me as I seek to learn from you and to manifest your character in my life. Thank you for choosing to walk with me – even though you are God.*

**Practical Application**

Undertake one of the following in order to creatively apply the message of the chapter. Bring your work and share it with your friends.

- **Write a short poem or prose reflecting an aspect of the chapter**
- **Creatively re-tell an aspect of the story, writing it in less than 50 words**
- **In less than 12 words, capture a personal lesson that resulted from the study together**
- **Paint or draw an aspect of the passage explored**
- **Bring or create some music that related to the study**
- **Share an answer to prayer that related to the passage studied**
- **With one or two others, act a scene of the story, re-telling it graphically**