

# The Healing of the Paralytic

*Mark 2:1-12*

## Introduction

The book of Mark was written to be “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). As a Gospel, it is “good news” that not only tells people who Jesus was, but also challenges them to think deeply about their personal relationship with him. As James Brooks says, “Mark is more than a book about Jesus. It is also a book about being a disciple of Jesus.” Thus, when Mark records the beginning of his ministry he quotes Jesus saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (1:15). Repentance and belief are essential ingredients of the good news about Jesus. Those who encounter Jesus must repent of the sins that they have committed against God and others and believe that Jesus can and will forgive them and restore their broken relationships.

This understanding of the way people should respond to the gospel fills the book and is clear in this passage. In these verses we encounter two different responses that characterize how both ancient and modern people react to the person of Jesus—faith and rejection.

## For Study and Discussion

- 1) Jesus’ return to his hometown caused so much excitement that the house where he was speaking was filled to overflowing. Many clearly thought that he was the Messiah or at least a new prophet. Even so, some people were present who had no interest in accepting Jesus’ words as good news.
  - a. Who were these people, what do you know about them, and why were they there?
  
  - b. Who in our modern world might be like them?
  
- 2) Mark’s main interest in this passage concerns the paralysed man who was brought to Jesus by his friends. While modern readers are often distracted by how they might dig a hole in the roof (which was probably made of sticks or straw caked with mud), the text is more interested in the fact that, “Jesus saw their faith.” The plural word *their* is key.
  - a. Do you think this means the faith of the four men who carried the bed or that it included the paralysed man? What might support your conclusion?
  
  - b. How does this impact your understanding of how Jesus responded? How should this influence the way you treat people who are ill today?
  
  - c. Why did Jesus say “Son, your sins are forgiven,” rather than “Rise, take up your bed and walk” when the second seems to make more sense in the context? Why did this upset the scribes so much that they accused Jesus of blasphemy? Note that blasphemy was a crime punishable in the OT by death (Lev 24:16) and would later be cited as a reason for Jesus to be killed (Mark 14:64).

- d. What is the connection between sin and sickness, and physical healing and the forgiveness of sin? Why would the scribes find this so surprising? Which is easier to say: “Your sins are forgiven” or “Rise, take up your bed and walk”? Why?

3) In v10 Jesus refers to himself as “Son of Man.” This is the usual way in which he referred to himself and the first of fourteen times he uses the phrase in Mark. In the OT, “son of man” is usually as a synonym for a man, a human being (see Psalm 8:4; 144:3; 145:12; Ezek 2:1, 3, 6, 8), Jesus apparently used it in a specially way, following Daniel 7:13 where it referred to the one who came before the Ancient of Days and was given dominion and glory and a kingdom and received the worship of many peoples. Jesus seemed to use this term because it was more ambiguous than openly calling himself the Messiah (with all of its political and religious overtones) and required that people made up their mind on who he was.

- a. Look at the passages in which “Son of Man” was used in Mark (2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 61) and classify the ways in which Jesus used the term. Notice that the emphasis is more on his destiny than identity.

- b. What was the reaction of the people who saw Jesus perform this miracle? Do you think that they understood that he was able to forgive sins? Why? Did everyone have the same reaction?

- c. How does Jesus’ ability to heal this paralysed man impact your prayers for others who are sick? How do you reconcile this with the reality that not everyone is healed and that we will all fall to our last illness?

### **Discipleship Pointers**

- Mark 2:1-12 is part of a section in the Gospel in which Jesus enters into conflict with Jewish religious leaders during his Galilean ministry (2:1-3:6). The conflict in this passage concerns Jesus’ ability to forgive sins. While the scribes believed Jesus’ announcement that the man’s sins were forgiven amounted to blasphemy, they had no problem acknowledging that the man was a sinner. They may well have blamed his paralysis on his sin.
- Many people in our day have a very different view of sin. Some deny that it exists. Others think that they are not guilty of sinning or that God will forgive all sins except perhaps for the most serious ones “because he’s nice and wouldn’t hold that against us.” The biblical picture of sin is quite distinct. Sin is a failure to hit the mark that God has set. It is lawlessness. It results in God’s wrath, punishment, and death. Only because of what Jesus did on the cross can people be properly forgiven of sin, God’s wrath removed, and relationship with God restored.

### **Family/Group Moments**

- Have you confessed your sin to God and asked for his forgiveness?
- Do you encourage others to do the same? Only those who acknowledge that they are sinners under God’s wrath see their need for a Savior and call out to him for salvation.