

**MARK**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Mark chapter 1 as we begin the Gospel of Mark. Now some may be wondering why we are doing another Gospel, aren't they all the same? No they are not. Each Gospel is giving to us a different picture of Christ and thus, we will go through all the Gospels and then move into the book of Acts.

Let me share this with you to show you the importance of the Gospels. We are told, Some years ago one of the world's renowned scholars of the classics, Dr. E. V. Rieu, completed a great translation of Homer into modern English for the Penguin Classics series. He was sixty years old, and he had been an agnostic all his life. The publisher soon approached him again and asked him to translate the Gospels. When Rieu's son heard this he said, "It will be interesting to see what Father will make of the four Gospels. It will be even more interesting to see what the four Gospels make of Father." He did not have to wonder very long. Within a year's time E. V. Rieu, the lifelong agnostic, responded to the Gospels he was translating and became a committed Christian. His story is a marvelous testimony to the transforming power of God's Word. Experiences like this have been repeated time and time again.

- R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume 1, p. 13

How true that is and the Gospels are not only for the unsaved but also for Christians so that they may grow in their relationship with Jesus!

Keep in mind, like Luke, Mark was not an Apostle and it would seem from the Scriptures that Mark, also called John Mark, was in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night Jesus was arrested. (Mark 14:50-52)

Mark was a young man then, maybe only some 12 years old or so. If that is true, which I believe it is, then how in the world did he gather this information on the life of Jesus?

It seems that Mark obtained his information from Peter who calls him “**... Mark my son**” in I Peter 5:13. Obviously he is not speaking of his biological son, but his son in the faith, leading Mark to the Lord.

Thus, the Gospel according to Mark is given to us through what Peter had shared with Mark. In II Peter 1:12-15 we read, “**For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.**” And Peter did leave us a reminder, a record of these things after his death, the Gospel according to Mark as well as I Peter and II Peter!

Now there are those who say Mark never wrote this Gospel, that it is the writings of several people over the years. This statement is from The Interpreters Bible, and is concerning the Gospel of Mark. It reads, “To all intents and purposes we must study the Gospel as if it were anonymous like most of the books of the Bible, not a product of personal literary authorship. **The book, Mark, cannot have been written by an eyewitness.** It is a compendium (a complete listing of subject matter) of church tradition, not the personal observations of a participant.”

That is interesting to me because when you look at the evidence, the writings, it points to Mark being the author. This is from Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, written about 140 A. D. We are told,

Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed him, but later on, as I said, he followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles, so single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.

- R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume 1, p. 14

Now this is important because the longer the timeframe from the events to the original writings and the manuscript copies, the more there is for there to be errors. So this was written in around 140 A. D. and thus, some 100 years from the death and resurrection of Jesus. But keep in mind that the Gospel of Mark was already written and studied by this time, so the date of the writing of Mark must be earlier than 140 A. D.

And we have information that dates the Gospel of Mark not 100 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus but maybe some 20 to 30 years after.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have proved to be invaluable in regards to the authenticity of the Scriptures and the dating of these manuscripts and the Gospel of Mark is evidence to that fact.

Found in cave number 7, fragment number 5 were the Greek letters "nu, nu, eta, sigma", and it was thought that this was the common Greek version of the form "egenesen," which means to "beget" or "be father of." The root of this word appears in our English word "generate" or "generation."

There was a man, in fact a scholar by the name of Jose O'Callaghan who tried to match these words with a Biblical passage from the Old Testament, but nothing seemed to fit. As he pondered this over and over in his mind, over a period of time, he thought of a word that may fit, Gennesaret. But the only problem was that this was a New Testament word. How could fragment number 5 be from the New Testament when this was supposed to be a Jewish separatist sect that lived in the area of Qumran, by the Dead Sea?

You see, the word "Gennesaret" is an Aramaic place name brought into the vocabulary of the early Greek-speaking Christians because of its role in the ministry of Christ. So O'Callaghan opened his Bible to Mark 6:53, which reads, "When they had crossed over, they came to the land of *Gennesaret* and anchored there." To his shock, fragment 5 fit perfectly into the text!

On March 18, 1972, as the news media heard what he discovered, that fragment number 5 was part of the Gospel of Mark, and was part of the Dead Sea Scrolls, newspapers begin to print this remarkable story. The New York Times reported, "If O'Callaghan's theory is accepted, it would prove that at least one of the Gospels, that of St. Mark, was written only a few years after the death of Jesus."

Well, it didn't take long for the critics of the Bible to rise up and try to refute O'Callaghan's claims. The problem with their complaining is that this document was dated before his revelation, and it was not dated by him. And we do know one thing for certain, that the people living in the Qumran community were destroyed before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D.

That means if the crucifixion of Christ occurred in A. D. 32, the Gospel of Mark was not written long after that. Thus, within a 20 to 30-year time frame we have a document from Mark's Gospel! It was not written 100's of years after the events, like some would have you believe by a variety of writers!

Mark is writing to Gentile Christians, Roman Christians who were being persecuted for their faith in Jesus. And Mark gives to these people Jesus, the suffering servant. He suffered as you are suffering, He knows your pain, they could relate to Him. In Mark 10:45 we are told, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

Mark presents to us Jesus as the suffering servant. And thus, there are no genealogies listed for Jesus in this Gospel because a slave’s heritage is not important. And Mark is giving to us an example to follow after, Jesus the servant!

Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience, so he quoted from the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the Messiah, the One the Old Testament prophets spoke of. For Mark’s audience, they had no knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures, so Mark does not quote much from them. And Mark moves quickly through the events in the life of Jesus. He does not want to lose his audience but he wants to make sure they understand who Jesus is and the gift of life He has given to them through His shed blood!

One more point before we move on and that is related to the name, John Mark. John was his Hebrew name but he is best known for his Latin name, Marcus.

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Mark chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**MARK 1****VERSES 1-5**

Mark is going to share with us the Gospel or the Good News of Jesus Christ. You see, the bad news is that sin has separated man from God, but the Good News is that Jesus has come to restore us back to God. So Mark is opening up with a bang, what his writing is all about – the good news of Jesus!

Now as you read verses 2 and 3 here in Mark chapter 1 you may be thinking, “Hey pastor Joe, I thought you said Mark did not quote out of the Old Testament and right here in the first chapter he does!”

Keep in mind that this is only one of a couple of verses that Mark quotes out of the Old Testament. Why? Because, like I have said, Mark is writing to the Romans who didn’t know the Hebrew Scriptures, so this would not be important to them. And Mark is going to move very quickly through the life of Jesus, keeping the readers alert, keeping the story flowing.

So he not only tells us the Good News of Jesus but he also tells us that there is a messenger or herald that has come to prepare the way, he will announce the coming of Christ and it is a fulfillment of what the prophets have said. (Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1, Isaiah 40:3).

This messenger, as we can see, is John the Baptist. Now, for some 400 years, since Malachi finished his message, God has been silent. But now God is going to speak through John the Baptist with a message of repentance, of preparing your hearts to receive the Messiah!

And as John the Baptist was giving this message of repentance, crowds came out into the wilderness from near and far to hear him. Some estimate that over 300,000 came to hear John.

Now if we were planning and outreach today, that is exactly what we would not do, plan it in the middle of nowhere! But the Holy Spirit was guiding John and leading the people to hear this message and the lesson to us, be sensitive to the Spirit's leading no matter how foolish it may sound!

And like today, when God's Word goes forth the lives of the people hearing God's Word are touched by God. And as they were touched they were baptized or immersed in the Jordan River signifying a cleansing. It symbolized a change in heart, a repentance or turning away from the old life and returning to God. It was and is an outward expression of an inward reality! And, as we will see, baptism was a picture of the death of the old life and coming up in the new life we have in Christ!

#### VERSES 6-8

An interesting character to say the least! John knows his mission, to go and prepare the hearts of the people to receive their Messiah, but at this point he does not know who this person is. Now why did the people come to listen to him? I believe it is because he lived what he believed, and thus, his message was real, it wasn't empty or for show! May that be our hearts desire, to live what we believe, and if we do, people will notice, they will listen.

Not only that but John the Baptist did not preach about himself, how great he was but he spoke of the One who was to come, the Messiah, in whom he was not even worthy to loosen His sandal strap. That is a humble man that had thousands of people around him and yet, he spoke of the only One that could help these people, the Messiah. What an important lesson for us to learn.

One more thing here and that is that John's baptism was one of repentance, it could not take away your sins, it could not cleanse you from your sins, and he in no way could impart the Holy Spirit.

But the One who is coming, the One that John the Baptist is preparing the way for could take away your sins because He was going to pay the debt for your sins on the cross of Calvary and He would empower believers with the Holy Spirit to live out the lives God wants them to live!

### VERSES 9-11

Mark tells us that Jesus traveled some seventy or eighty miles from Nazareth to the Jordan River by the city of Jericho, and here He is baptized by John. But why, for John's baptism was one of repentance? Does that mean Jesus was a sinner?

Of course not, for the Scriptures speak contrary to that. Jesus is identifying Himself with sinners, to be one with us so that He could stand in our place and pay the penalty for our sins.

You see, Jesus didn't need to repent of sin or even be baptized, but He became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Also, Jesus is giving us an example to follow, that we need to die to the old life and come up new in Christ, empowered by the Spirit of God.

And once again we see a picture of the Holy Trinity in these verses. We see Jesus, God the Son. We see the dove descending upon Jesus as a picture of the Holy Spirit. And we see God the Father speak, "**You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**"

One God manifested in three distinct persons. Explain it, I can't. Believe it, I do because the Scriptures clearly teach it!



### VERSES 12-13

After this Jesus goes into the wilderness for forty days and is tempted three times by Satan and each time Jesus defends Himself with the Word of God. When we studied the Gospel of Matthew we looked at this closely and we will look at it again when we get to the Gospel of Luke.

But one thing I do want to say and that is the example that Jesus gives to us, using the Word of God to defeat the scheming's of the Devil! What an example for each of us to follow, use the Sword of the Spirit in battle, the Word of God, stand strong upon it.

Now why the forty days? The number forty is often used in the Scriptures as a picture of testing or judgment. It rained for forty days and forty nights during the time of Noah. We see that Israel was in the wilderness for forty years. Thus, this is a time of testing for Jesus and thus, He not only identified with us in baptism but also in temptations as Paul reminds us, **“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”** Hebrews 2:18.

### VERSES 14-15

We see that Mark skips over the Lord's ministry in Judah and Jerusalem and opens up with His ministry in the area of Galilee, after John the Baptist was arrested by Herod. We will deal more with the arrest and subsequent murder of John the Baptist when we get to Mark chapter 6, but this is just a reference point for us, John is in prison and Jesus came to Galilee.

Now keep in mind that Galilee was not some hick town. The Jewish historian, Josephus tells us that Galilee covered an area 60 by 30 miles and had some 204 villages located there with none less than 15,000 people. That puts the population of Galilee over 3 million!

Also, we need to keep in mind that the Jews were looking for the Kingdom to be established and thus, when they heard “**the kingdom of God is at hand**” they are thinking the establishment of the Kingdom! But that is now what Jesus was speaking of.

Then what does it mean when Jesus says “**the kingdom of God is at hand**”? In Luke 17:20-21 we are told, “**Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, “See here!” or “See there!” For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.’**”

You see, when you turn from your sins and come to God through Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God is established, not on an earthly throne, but on the throne of your heart! Yes, there is coming a day when God’s Kingdom will be established on this earth and Jesus will rule and reign from the throne of David, but if you come to Christ then the King is seated upon the throne of your heart!

And notice that Jesus does not preach some fluffy message but a message of repentance, of turning from sin and towards God and to believe in the Gospel message. Morgan sums it up like this, “There are many people who believe the Gospel, but they do not believe *in* it. It was an appeal not only to accept it as an intellectually accurate statement; but to rest in it, to repose in it. It was a call to let the heart find ease in it.”

#### VERSES 16-20

Here in Mark we see 4 of the 12 Apostles called by Jesus. These men heard the teachings of Jesus so as they were called, they came forward. And I think we just read through this and think nothing of it. But these men had jobs, businesses that they left to follow Jesus.

James and John worked for their father and they must have had money, they had hired servants for their fishing business. But Jesus called them and they followed Him! They left it all and went after Jesus!

That is a question you must answer, not only for salvation, but in service. Yes, you must come to that saving faith by repenting of your sins and asking Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life!

But following Jesus does not end there. We must follow Him where He is leading us. Thus, what excuses are you making in not serving the Lord? You see, if you are fully convinced of who He is, you will forsake all and follow Him! Many Christians are missing out on the blessings God has for them because they are unwilling to step out in faith. Don't miss out.

I love the way that Jesus put in John 14:12-14, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”** God wants to do great things in us and through us and all He is asking us to do is follow Him!

So if the Lord is putting something upon your heart, take those steps of faith and follow Him, serve Him so that all glory and honor may go to Him!

#### VERSES 21-22

Capernaum is now the base camp for Jesus and His men, and this city is located on the Northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. And we are told that Jesus and His men went into the synagogue and He taught them, which was a common practice to have teachers come in and share.

You can go to Israel today and there in Capernaum you can see the remains of an ancient Jewish synagogue that's foundation was built upon this synagogue that Jesus taught in! An amazing sight indeed.

Now as Jesus is teaching them they are blown away by what He is saying. We are told that "**He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**" You see, Jesus spoke with the authority of God. On the other hand, the rabbis would quote other rabbis to make their point.

Why is the church today so anemic? Because we don't teach with authority, or I should say, some don't. You see, if you are not teaching from the Word of God, and I am not talking about a verse here and a verse there, but the whole council of God, then you are not teaching with the authority of God but with the ideas, the philosophies of this world!

God's Word is living, it is powerful and it is able to transform lives as it is opened up to us by the Spirit of God. Never forget that!

#### VERSES 23-24

As Jesus is teaching with authority, as the Word of God was going forth, all of a sudden there is this outburst. This man with a demon cries out, "**Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God!**"

First of all I want you to see that these demons knew who Jesus is, Almighty God and that He is going to destroy them one day. They may not know the time but they do know what lies in their future.

I wonder how many today know who Jesus is? And think about the synagogue filled with Jews, many religious leaders probably, and they did not know who Jesus is, but these demons certainly did because before they rebelled before God with Satan, they were angels in heaven!

The other point is that when you are serving God, when you are doing the work of God, you should expect the demonic world coming against you to stop you. Now I am not saying that they will manifest themselves like we see here, they could but most of the time this is done through people. They will come against you but the thing you need to remember is what we are told in I John 4:4-6, **“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”**

Nothing is going to stop the plan and purposes of God, remember that. And yes things can get tough, there may be much persecution as we are serving the Lord. But if you are not encountering any trouble as you live out your faith, then the demonic world is not too concerned about you! That is a problem.

Now notice what Jesus does, how He handles this situation.

#### VERSES 25-28

I bet His fame spread quickly after He delivered this man from this demon or demons! This demon or demons tried to stop Jesus from speaking forth the Word of God and Jesus put them to silence.

You see, it is the power of God that sets us free! We need to walk by faith and trust that He will see us through, He will empower us for the work He has called us to do. And remember, keep Jesus between you and the Devil!

As the people in the synagogue are watching this, they are blown away. Why were they so blown away? Think about it. There were those who claimed to be able to deliver a person from demons, but never like this. And I wonder how many times this man who was demon possessed sat in the synagogue and this demon or demons felt no need to speak forth because what teachers were saying were just empty words, there was no life to them. They did not speak with authority!

Now, the Words that Jesus spoke were not empty, what He said He was able to do. And the people were blown away at what they saw. What about in your life, are people standing up and taking notice of what you are doing for the Lord? They should be.

Now they might not always like it, but they won't be able to deny it! Let your actions match up to your words and people will look and as they do, may they see Jesus in you! It is as Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**"

#### VERSES 29-31

Here we see that as they leave the Synagogue, Peter invites Jesus, James, John and his brother Andrew over for a meal. But as they arrive, Peter's mother-in-law was very ill, she could have died.

And I love what they do here. No, they did not call 911 but they did call the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, who touched her and healed her. And the amazing thing is she gets up and serves them. Why? Because anytime a person is truly touched by Jesus, the end result will be service to others, ministering to the needs of others. A good lesson for all of us to learn and apply.

And when you think about it, we all were sick in sin, we were dead in our trespasses and sins and yet, by the touch of Jesus we are healed. And tragically, many sit on the sidelines and they don't serve even though they have been touched by Jesus. That should not be. We should serve Him out of love, out of gratitude for what He has done in our lives!

#### VERSES 32-34

As evening approached the Sabbath was over and they could once again travel. Now as news spread of where Jesus was at, Peter's house, people came from all over the city wanting to be touched and healed by Jesus. And in the Greek it is speaking of a continual flow of people coming and going. What a busy day and yet, Jesus kept making time for those who needed Him.

Let me also say this. A church should be a place where people come to be touched by Jesus, but too often today people come to be entertained and they leave as empty as they came. Jesus speaks to us through His Word and if His Word is not being taught, then the people are left empty, they are not touched by God! It is as simple as that.

All these miracles are being done here in Capernaum, what a witness of the Messiah, but down the road Jesus is going to rebuke Capernaum for its unbelief! They saw all these miracles; people were touched by Jesus but that physical healing was all that many received because of unbelief. And in the end, they will die in their sins.

And as I think about this, what a lesson for America to learn. With all the mighty things that God has done in this nation, and yet we are moving away from God, taking Him out of the picture. Be careful! Be Warned!

### VERSE 35

Here we see Jesus get up early to pray and the word that is used for “**morning**” speaks of the last watch of the night, which was from 3 am to 6 am. And we are told that He got up long before the sun rose. Why did He get up so early since He had such a busy day before? We will see in a few minutes as we read on.

I want to say one more thing here in regards to prayer and I like what E. Stanley Jones wrote, how he described prayer. He said that prayer is a “time exposure to God.” I like that. You see, he saw life as a photographic plate so that when exposed to God it will progressively bear the image of God. The length of exposure the better the image and prayer is that time we spend with God, reading His Word is that time we spend with God so that as time goes by, we become more like Him!

Now let’s see what that prayer was all about as we read on.

### VERSES 36-39

As His men awoke they tried looking for Jesus because the people had already gathered around Peter’s house to see Jesus, another day of ministry. And the Apostles were probably a little annoyed at Jesus because there was work to do but He wasn’t around.



Now keep in mind that things were happening in Capernaum, and you would think they would stay there, but Jesus says they need to move on to other cities in Galilee. What's up with that? Jesus had just spent time with the Father and His day was now being directed, not in the obvious, but to move on to the other towns in the area.

That is a great lesson for us. That we don't go by our understanding of a situation, what seems logical to us, if God is calling us to move on. Let Him direct your paths. Be in fellowship with Him, be in prayer.

And what was the purpose that Jesus came? He tells us, “**... that I may preach ...**” May we understand that because that is what is needed in pulpits across America today, the preaching and teaching of God's Word!

#### VERSES 40-45

Make no mistake about it, leprosy is a deadly disease that eats away at the nerve endings in your body so that you do not feel pain, you are insensitive to things. And over time your body is eaten away by rats or you burn yourself and you become disfigured. You just can't feel any longer and you don't recognize that something is destroying your life.

It is very much like sin and just as deadly. And here, this person with leprosy comes to Jesus, recognizing that Jesus could heal him, but was unsure if He would. That is faith! That is leaving it up to the sovereignty of God. Not my will but His be done! And Jesus, having compassion on this man, feeling his pain, touches this untouchable man and heals him. God wants to touch us if we would only reach out to Him.

And I love the picture here because this man was like the walking dead and the same is true for us as sinners, spiritually speaking. And the picture here is that the moment we come to Jesus we are cleansed, we are saved. You see, salvation is not a process of working your way into heaven, it is a free gift of God. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”** You see, that old rotting sin nature is replaced with a new nature that is given to us by God.

And Jesus tells this man to go and tell the priest’s. Why did Jesus say that? Because of what we are told in Leviticus 14:1-2, **“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.’”**

Remember, leprosy was an incurable disease but God made a stipulation in the law for a miracle to take place, a healing of leprosy and can you imagine when this guy came to the priests being cleansed from this disease. I am sure they never saw this in their lifetime and in the Old Testament there are just a few mentions of this disease and the healing, for the most part, God did amongst the Gentiles! But now, here this Jewish man is healed. Can you imagine what was going on with these priests when they saw this man.

“We had a Leviticus 14 today!” “No way!” “Yes, way!” What a witness of the power of God if they would only open their eyes and see it. And that is man’s problem today, they close their eyes to the power of God, they don’t want to see it.

Now Jesus did not want the attention, His time was still down the road, so He tells this man to tell no one but the priests. And think about it, for this man and really for anyone touched by God, it is impossible to keep silent, or at least it should be. Jesus didn't want the crowds coming just to be healed physically, He didn't want to be lifted up as King, it was not time yet as I have said.

## **MARK 2**

### **VERSES 1-12**

As Jesus returns to Capernaum, back to Peter's house, He continues to preach the Word of God to a packed house. There was no room even to sit down. Why? Because of the Good News that Jesus brought to them, the forgiveness of sin, that everlasting life! That is what should be spoken from the pulpits today, but it tends to be a feel good gospel, missing the message of God, for they tend to make people feel good about living in sin.

And we are told that there are four men who are carrying their paralyzed friend who couldn't walk, to Jesus, for he couldn't get there on his own. But as they arrive, the house is packed, so they carry him up to the top of the roof, removing part of the roof, and they lower him down right in front of Jesus.

Keep in mind that this roof was probably some two feet thick, and they are tearing it apart to make an opening to lower their friend to Jesus to be healed. There is dirt, maybe some grass growing on top of this roof and nothing stops them. That is determination.

Today, if it is cloudy outside, there is a flake of snow in the air, people don't come to church, they don't bring people to Jesus because they let obstacles prevent them from forging ahead, but not these guys. They knew if they could bring their friend to Jesus, He would be healed. Is that what you believe? We should! Does our behavior, our actions, reflect what we believe is true about the Lord? It should!

Now picture what is going on here. Jesus is teaching and as He is teaching this roof is being torn off. Pieces of the roof were probably falling down around Jesus. Now as this is going on, were the people listening to Jesus upset because they were interrupting what was going on? Was Peter mad that his roof was being torn off?

We don't know, but this we do know, Jesus reached out to this man with love and compassion. And Jesus says, "**Son, your sins are forgiven you.**" Now I tend to think that these guys on the roof were at least thinking if they weren't shouting, "No, heal him, make him whole again. Make him stand up on his feet, that is why we brought him to You!" And you know what, that is exactly what Jesus was doing, healing him, making him whole again, both physically and spiritually.

You see, most paralysis in those days was due to syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease. And now, at the end of his life, paralyzed, no hope, he is brought to Jesus. His sickness was a direct result of sin, but not all sickness is. Now we see it was the faith of his friends that brought him to Jesus, but that is as far as they could go. It was his own faith that brought the forgiveness of sin, for the forgiveness of sin can only come to them who repent of it and come to Jesus!

And notice what takes place when Jesus says that this man's sins are forgiven. These religious leaders, sitting up front because of their position, were outraged at what Jesus said. They knew what Isaiah 43:25 said, "**I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.**" You see, they knew only God could forgive sins, and they rejected the possibility that Jesus is God, even though He is going to give them an awesome show of His power.

So Jesus asks them what is easier, to forgive sins or to heal this paralytic? Obviously it would be easier to say your sins are forgiven for it would be difficult to prove or disprove. But, if you healed someone, the evidence would be right there for all to see. So Jesus, to authenticate what He has done, forgiving this man's sins, says in verse 10, "**I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go your way to your house.**" And he immediately rose to his feet!

Now the evidence was before them as Jesus heals this man. They could not deny the healing, but they, like many today, refuse to believe that Jesus is God, so they will come up with an alternative explanation to prove their position. How sad to go to that extreme to reject the truth!

For the crowds of people, they were saying, "**We never saw anything like this!**" They were amazed and we should be amazed at the work that God is doing in our day, in our lives!

VERSES 13-17

Here we see Levi the tax collector, Matthew as we know him, called by Jesus. And like today, they didn't like tax collectors, they were wicked people. You see, the Romans would get these tax collectors who would make a profit by taxing the people over the fixed rate that Rome had set, and it was perfectly legal, that was their profit. So these guys were corrupt, they ripped people off, and thus they were hated by the people.

Lane makes these comments regarding tax collectors, "When a Jew entered the customs service he was regarded as an outcast from society: he was disqualified as a judge or a witness in a court session, was excommunicated from the synagogue, and in the eyes of the community his disgrace extended to his family."

Here is this wonderful picture. Despised by the world, not a good person, Jesus calls Levi to come and follow Him. Jesus came to save those who are sick in sin, not those who were healthy and Levi was sick and Jesus reaches out to him. And we see that Levi gets up and leaves his lucrative business to follow Jesus. It does cost us many times to follow Jesus, but it is worth it!

Did Jesus really impact this man's life? You bet He did. How do I know? Because Levi throws a party and invites tax collectors and sinners to come and hear about Jesus!

Now you wouldn't think anyone would be upset over this, but there is one group that is, the religious leaders. Why? They didn't want to associate with those kinds of people, sinners and tax collectors. They were the scum of society.

And tragically, many Christians do the same today, they have that same awful attitude. Jesus sat down right in the middle because He came to save that which was lost, He came to heal those who were sick, you and me!

VERSES 18-20

In Matthew chapter 9 we are told that it was the disciples of John who came to Jesus with this question about fasting and why the disciples of Jesus were not fasting. You see, according to Leviticus 16:29 they were only required to fast one day a year, that was on the day of Atonement.

But by the time of Jesus the religious leaders developed the law to the point where they had to fast twice a week to be spiritual, on Monday's and Thursday's. And the religious leaders and the disciples of John were upset because Jesus and His men were not fasting. The disciples of Jesus were full of joy while these others were into dead works and rituals which made them un-joyful and legalistic.

It wasn't that Jesus was against fasting, for He said in Matthew 6:16-18, "**Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.**" You see, it is a matter of the heart that is then manifested in our actions, they had it the other way around!

So Jesus explains this by using the illustration of a wedding feast. During the Jewish wedding feast, they would celebrate for seven days and what a celebration it was. Obviously there was no fasting done during this feast. And the point that Jesus is making here is that the joy of His disciples is directly related to how closely they were to Jesus. And the same is true for us. You can tell how close someone is to Jesus by the way they look and act. It is as Psalm 16:11 says, **“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

And here in Mark 2:20 I see Jesus give us a hint of His coming death. You see, He is the Bridegroom and will be taken away. And in the Greek it speaks of a violent removal. But that sorrow would once again turn to joy as He rises from the dead on the third day!

#### VERSES 21-22

Jesus’ point is this. He did not come to work within this old, dead religious system, but to call people into a relationship with Him. And many times that is a problem, as God begins to work, people like to box God up and market Him, and God will not be put into a box. We need to be open to God’s Spirit, what He wants to do in our community, through our church, or He will look elsewhere to work!

Now let me also say this because there are those that feel we are so interested in doctrine that we are not open to the Spirit of God to move. That may sound good, but it is wrong and dangerously wrong.



The Spirit of God works in accordance to the Word of God and not apart from the Word of God. The old garment is dead works, a dead religious system and Jesus did not come to reform but to establish the new! And that is salvation through the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

And when I say new I am not saying it is a new idea. Salvation was never found in the sacrifice of an animal; they could never take away your sins. Thus, the Old Covenant, the Law was to point out our sin to us and draw us to the Savior, Jesus Christ!

But the Jews refused to see and thus, God was going to use new wine skins to bring forth this message, He was going to use Gentiles!

And we see an example of this dead orthodoxy that the Jewish religious leaders developed, their ideas of what was lawful and what was not in the next few verses.

#### VERSES 23-24

Jesus and His disciples were traveling and they were going through the wheat fields to get to their destination. Now it happened to be the Sabbath day and they were hungry at this point. So they were plucking the wheat with their hands, rubbing it in their hands causing the chaff to separate, and then they would blow on it causing the chaff to blow away, leaving the wheat kernel for them to eat.

This was lawful for them to do according to Deuteronomy 23:25, which says, “**When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.**”

Also, keep in mind that these grain fields were set-up in rows and there were paths between these rows for people to walk through. So the disciples were not doing anything wrong.

And here come the Pharisees, and they were watching Jesus and His men, trying to catch them doing something that was wrong according to their law. And when they saw them picking the grain they said, “**Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?**”

So these Pharisees are coming against Jesus for breaking the Sabbath day Law by reaping the grain, threshing the grain and winnowing the grain. The question I have, and the thing I find interesting is, “How did the Pharisees get to the field if they were not to travel more than 3,000 feet from their own house on the Sabbath?” according to their interpretation of the Law!

Like today, they had exceptions to every Law. For example, pressing a button is work, so on the Sabbath, all elevators will stop on every floor so you won't have to press any buttons and break the Sabbath Law, or should I say the laws that were developed by man, the traditions that have developed over the years!

How will Jesus answer this question that they have about the disciples of Jesus breaking the Sabbath day law? Look at what He says.

#### VERSES 25-28

Jesus nails these guys by taking them back to the very Scriptures that they were supposed to know. Notice the rebuke, “**Have you never read . . .**” He is rebuking them for not reading the Scriptures or if they did read them, which they did, they just did not believe them or see the application of them.

Here we see that Jesus uses King David as an example, from I Samuel chapter 21. As he was fleeing from Saul, who wanted David dead, he came to Nob where the Tabernacle was located, and asked for food from Ahimelech the priest, for he and his men were very hungry.

And the only food was the showbread, 12 loaves that were baked each Sabbath and were set out on the Table of Showbread outside of the Holy of Holies. The 12 loaves represented the 12 tribes of Israel. Thus, each week the old loaves would be removed and the new ones placed on the table. The old loaves would then be eaten by the priests, and only the priests, according to Leviticus 24:5-9.

Here in Mark Jesus speaks of Abiathar the high priest but Matthew tells us it was Ahimelech, why the difference? According to I Samuel chapter 21 the high priest was Ahimelech and Abiathar was his son who became high priest shortly after Ahimelech and was more prominent than his father.

One writer summed it up like this, “This was a customary Jewish way of indicating the section of the Old Testament where a desired incident could be found. Abiathar became high priest shortly after Ahimelech and proved more prominent than he, thus justifying the use of his name here.” (Bible Knowledge Commentary/Old Testament)

So I will use Ahimelech here. And what we see in this story is that Ahimelech gave the bread to David and his men to eat, which was unlawful to do. And God does not rebuke Ahimelech or David for doing that. Why? Because man’s needs outweigh ceremonial regulations! And the Pharisees were not going to argue that David was wrong! It was in the Scriptures, but again, their man made laws superseded the Words of God.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. As you are walking down the street you see someone drowning in a pond by their house. And if you don't do something quick, it will be too late.

The problem or dilemma you face is that there is a sign on the lawn that says, "**No Trespassing!**" What are you going to do? You don't want to break the law!

Some may say, "I Hope someone hears his cries for help soon!" Or "I hope someone who lives there hears his cry and comes to save him!"

Now both those statements would be foolish. Of course you are going to run past the sign and save the man. But you would, in a sense, be breaking the law, right? Yes, but again, the needs of man outweigh this law. You see, when you do you won't be arrested as a criminal but you will be a hero. Why? Because the need of man supersedes the law!

The second point that Jesus is making is regarding the Sabbath day. Now in Exodus chapter 31 God says that anyone who profanes the Sabbath day shall be put to death. So isn't it better to error on the conservative side?

No, not at all, because that is not what is being said. The spiritual principle God is giving to us is this, if you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ, you are going to die in your sins, for He is Lord of the Sabbath, He is our rest!

You see, man continues to make all these rules and regulations to make them holy before God, and God says that will never happen. All God wants is our hearts, and understand this, the Lord of the Sabbath knows what He is talking about, for He gave man the Sabbath to fellowship with Him by! Let me leave you with this to think about. God doesn't want a legalistic relationship with us, but a love relationship! He is Lord of the Sabbath!