

Portraits of Jesus

A Study of the Gospel of Mark

by Gary Fisher

Instructions:

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If you have not already done so, save this lesson to your computer using the "save" feature of your browser or PDF reader. Then print out the lesson (or at least open it in your browser or PDF reader **offline** – not on the Internet). Read the lesson and **study in your Bible the passages indicated >>> Scripture <<<**. Following each passage, study each question that has a number enclosed in asterisks (*1*, *2*, etc.), and **write down your answers on paper**. Some questions include more than one number because they have more than one blank to fill in. ("Think" questions should be carefully considered for your own benefit, but your answers will not be submitted to us.) Please take your time, study each passage carefully, answer the questions honestly, and consider the applications to your own life (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15).

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Opposition to Jesus Grows

Lesson 2

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

>>> Read Mark 2:1–12. <<<

As a result of His teaching and miracles, Jesus' popularity grew rapidly. So many wanted to hear Him that they filled the house in Capernaum where He was teaching and crowded around it. Just then, five men arrived, eager to see Jesus too. One of them was paralyzed and the other four carried him on a stretcher. It was impossible for them to get in through the door, so they climbed up on the roof, dug a hole in it and let the paralytic down through the opening they had created. You can imagine the commotion among the crowd in the house below.

When Jesus saw the faith they had demonstrated, He told the lame man that his sins were forgiven. That was probably not what the man had expected, but it is every man's greatest need. The scribes who were present thought Jesus had blasphemed because God alone can forgive sins. Jesus read their minds and asked: Which is easier to say—your sins are forgiven, or get up and walk? To prove His ability to forgive sins (something invisible and therefore impossible to verify), He healed the paralytic who then got up and walked. Jesus proved His power to conquer invisible, spiritual problems by overcoming a visible, physical problem. The crowd was dumbfounded. They had never seen anything to compare with Jesus.

Note — Who will reach Jesus? Consider the five men as they approached the house in which Jesus was teaching. They had come in order to see Him, but their way to Jesus was blocked by a big obstacle: the crowd. Many would have simply turned around and gone back home. Not these men. They were determined, even desperate, in their desire to see Jesus. Their procedure, unroofing the roof, was radical but it worked. Even today, those who want to come to Jesus frequently encounter barriers in their path. The only ones who actually reach Him, are those who are absolutely determined and who refuse to allow anything to keep them from following Him. How determined to be with Jesus are you?

1 What did the paralytic and his friends do when they were unable to reach Jesus? a) gave up and went home; b) waited for God to open a path through the crowd; c) offered a financial contribution; d) took off part of the roof so the paralytic could enter the house through the opening. Answer: _____.

2 What did Jesus do for the paralytic before healing him? Answer: He _____ his sins.

3 Who alone can forgive sins? Answer: Only _____ can forgive sins.

4 How did Jesus prove He has the power to forgive sins? Answer: He _____ the paralyzed man.

(Thought question: If only God can forgive sins, but Jesus proved that He could forgive sins, what does that prove about the nature of Jesus?)

Jesus Socializes with Outcasts

>>> Read Mark 2:13–17. <<<

One of Jesus' more surprising actions was calling Levi to be a disciple. Levi had been a tax collector. In that era, tax collectors were viewed as both thieves and traitors because they used dishonest tactics to raise funds for the hated Roman invaders. Adding a tax collector to His inner circle was hardly a move that could be expected to increase Jesus' popularity! Later, Levi held a banquet in Christ's honor. He invited his friends: other tax collectors and sinners. The scribes and Pharisees were outraged because they thought it improper for a teacher of religion to eat with immoral people. When Jesus overheard their criticism, He asked: Who needs a doctor—the sick or the well? His purpose, He said, was not to call righteous, but sinners. The Lord never hesitated to break society's norms and customs.

5 Name the tax collector whom Jesus called. Answer: His name was _____.

6 What reason did Jesus give to explain why He socialized with sinful people? a) He wanted to participate in their sins; b) He did not believe that sinful people can be a bad influence on good people; c) He wanted to teach the sinners to repent; d) He believed sinners will be saved, even if they don't change. Answer: _____.

Jesus' Disciples Don't Fast

>>> Read Mark 2:18–22. <<<

Some of the Pharisees and disciples of John came to Jesus asking why He and His disciples didn't fast like other religious people did. Jesus explained by illustration. He said that no one would fast at a time of celebration, such as a wedding. His own presence on the earth made it a joyous time of feasting because He was the bridegroom. Since fasting should fit the occasion, it was inappropriate in this situation. He also explained that just as no one would put new wine in old bottles or a new patch on old jeans, it was equally out of place to put the newly revealed gospel of Christ into the old traditional forms of the Jews. Fasting was just not the right thing to do when the Son of God Himself was present.

7 How did Jesus explain why His disciples didn't fast? a) He said they did fast, but did it secretly; b) He said that His presence made it a time of joy in which fasting was inappropriate; c) He condemned all fasting; d) He admitted they were wrong and should have fasted. Answer: _____.

Disciples Break Sabbath Traditions

>>> Read Mark 2:23–28. <<<

The more popular Jesus became, the more outspoken His opponents' attacks. Jesus and His disciples provided easy targets for their critics, because they refused to follow the religious traditions of their age. Jewish tradition regarding the Sabbath day prohibited all activity, including plucking grain to eat, but Jesus and His followers ignored these cherished doctrines. When the Jewish officials criticized the disciples, Jesus defended their actions by noting His opponents' inconsistency: they justified David when he broke God's law, but they condemned Him when He merely violated men's traditions. Then He explained that God had intended for the Sabbath command to provide relief for man, not be an additional burden. Finally, Jesus proclaimed His authority over the Sabbath saying that He Himself was Lord of the Sabbath. If Jesus created the Sabbath, surely He knew what activities violated it.

8 What did Jesus call Himself? Answer: He was Lord of the _____.

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

>>> Read Mark 3:1–6. <<<

As their hatred of Jesus mounted, His enemies searched for every possible chance to attack Him, but He kept evading their traps. On this occasion, a man with a withered hand was in the synagogue. Jesus asked His opponents' opinion on whether or not to help the man, but they refused to reply. Jesus then told him to stretch his hand out. Apparently He neither touched him nor did any other physical thing—He merely asked the man to reach his hand out. When he did, it was healed. Jesus' critics were furious and began plotting to assassinate Him.

Note — **To save a life or to kill:** In 3:4 Jesus asked His opponents: *Should one save a life or kill on the Sabbath? They chose not to reply, which showed that they were not interested in truth, but only wanted to discredit Him. It is always easy to find fault, but it is much harder to give a positive recommendation. Normally Christ healed men by laying His hands on them or performing some other physical sign. If He had accompanied the healing by physical action in this case, they would have attacked Him for doing medical work on the Sabbath, something contrary to their tradition. This time, however, Jesus did nothing—He merely told the man to reach his hand out. Even Jesus' enemies did*

not believe it wrong to stretch out your hand on the Sabbath. Thus, He outsmarted His opponents; they were furious. When a man in an argument begins to get angry, it is a sure sign that he is losing. As it turned out, Jesus' enemies are the ones who plotted to kill on the Sabbath, because He had done good.

9 How many sins did Jesus commit during His lifetime (see 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:21,22; Hebrews 4:15)? Answer (give a number): _____.

10 The activities Jesus did on the sabbath violated what rules? a) only uninspired Jewish traditions; b) the 10 commands; c) the Law of Moses; d) the New Testament; e) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

11 What did Jesus' enemies do after He had healed the man with the withered hand? Answer: They plotted to _____ Jesus.

Jesus' Popularity Grows

>>> Read Mark 3:7–12.<<<

Though Jesus frequently tried to withdraw, people followed Him from everywhere. He continued teaching, healing and casting out demons. While neither the crowd nor the religious leaders seemed to have recognized His true identity, the demons confessed Jesus as the Son of God. He declined their testimony, however, since He did not want the recommendation of the Devil.

Jesus Appoints Twelve as Apostles

>>> Read Mark 3:13–19. <<<

Jesus needed to train apprentices to represent Him and preach the gospel after His departure. He chose twelve of His followers for that job. The twelve He chose were an unlikely bunch: included were four fishermen, a tax collector, a revolutionary (Simon the "Zealot"), a skeptic (Thomas), and a traitor (Judas Iscariot). Jesus proved that He could work with and make something out of even the most unpromising material.

12 What work did Jesus empower the apostles to do (read Mark 3:15 and Matt. 10:1)? a) preach the gospel; b) heal diseases, c) cast out demons, d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

Accusations of Satanic Influence

>>> Read Mark 3:20–30. <<<

While Jesus' family thought He had gone crazy, the Pharisees charged that He accomplished His work through the power of the devil. They were desperately seeking to discredit Him and diminish His influence. Jesus' devastating reply silenced them. First, He said that it would be unreasonable and even disastrous for the devil to begin attacking himself. Civil wars don't produce strong kingdoms. Second, Christ explained that He had come to rob the strong man (the devil), taking from him the souls that had been under his control. Logically, He would need to disarm Satan to accomplish this goal, so expelling demons was a predictable facet of His strategy. Finally, He warned of the serious consequences of hardening one's heart to the point of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. These scribes were demonstrating a malicious and possibly fatal attitude toward the work of God.

* 13* How did Jesus' enemies explain His ability to cast out demons? a) He did it by the power of the devil; b) He did it because He was the Son of God; c) it just seemed like He expelled demons but He really didn't; d) they didn't try to explain it. Answer: _____.

14 What did Jesus say would happen to a kingdom that was divided against itself (v24)? Answer: He said that kingdom cannot _____.

Jesus' True Family

>>> Read Mark 3:31–35. <<<

Jesus' physical family didn't understand Him. They came to try to talk to Him, perhaps to persuade Him to take a break. He refused to give them a private hearing, explaining that His family no longer had a special claim on His attention. Jesus' true family consists of those who hear and do His will. This incident shows that Mary had no special influence or privilege; Jesus treats all of His obedient followers equally.

15 Who wanted to talk to Jesus? a) His aunt and cousins, b) His mother and brothers, c) His father, d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

16 Who did Jesus say are His real family members? Answer: Those who _____ the will of God.

Summary: Jesus was continually under attack. He was criticized because He forgave sins, ate with sinners, didn't fast, didn't observe the religious establishment's Sabbath doctrines, and cast out demons. He never cracked under the intense scrutiny and pressure. Much to the contrary, He continually affirmed principles that are extremely important even for our service to Him: 1) the priority of forgiveness of sins over physical healing, 2) the importance of recognizing one's spiritual sickness, 3) the fact that fasting is to be done only when it fits the circumstances, 4) the uselessness of religious traditions, and 5) the critical danger of hardheartedly rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit.

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, [click on this link to submit your answers.](#)

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