

Gospel of Mark

Persecution

Week 3

Mark 2

I. Why Was Jesus Prosecuted?

In Chapter 2, we are provided some of the detail as to why Jesus was prosecuted. Four episodes are summarized, plus an additional one in the first six verses of Chapter 3. By the time that we get to Mark 3:6, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were plotting to kill Jesus.

Why did they want to kill Him? Here was a man preaching goodness and love. Here was a man healing many people and who had the authority to drive out demons. One might think that that the religious leaders would accept Him with open arms.

The problem is that Jesus does not do it their way. He does it God's way. A personal check for us is whether we are truly seeking to do it God's way or if we are trying to follow some religious system where we check off our accomplishments to demonstrate how much we have achieved. In God's way, since it requires us to be perfect (in actions but more importantly in thoughts), we will always fail to some degree since we are still a work in progress (Phil. 1:6).

Note: The relative timing of these episodes is not identified. They might not be consecutive and might be from different periods in Jesus' ministry.

II. Desperate Situations Call for Drastic Actions:

Mark 2:1-5

Mark 2:1-5

2:1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

NIV

The counterparts for Mark 2:1-12 are Matthew 9:1-8 and Luke 5:17-26.

We do not know how the young man (NOTE: Matthew identified him as a boy.) became paralyzed, but we do know that he was in desperate straits. In the medicine of his time, there was no hope for recovery. He could only look forward to miserable days ahead of him. Perhaps, he was on the edge of death.

But, he had four friends who appear to have loved him because we see them going to the next level of service. Without any other hope, they bring the paralytic to Jesus. It is always a lot easier to call on Jesus when we have no other hope. Their hope manifested itself into faith that Jesus could help them. They were right.

Verse 1: "Few days later" translates "days later," which could have been many days later. The last verse of chapter 1 says that the "days later" occurred after Jesus made a tour of Galilee.

Verse 1: What does "He had come home" mean? Perhaps, Jesus was living with His mother in Capernaum, perhaps with Simon Peter, or in some other way.

Verse 3: The man was lucky that he had four friends to help him. He also recognized that he had an affliction requiring healing. Many people require spiritual healing, but do not know it...even when they have friends to help them.

Verse 4: Luke expands Mark's summary on their entrance in the "home": **Luke 5:19**

19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

NIV

Verse 5: First, Jesus heals the man, noting that the healing apparently started with spiritual healing. Was the man a paralytic because of sin? We do not know the answer to that question. (Note: It is not clear if the man was healed physically or if that did not happen until verses 11-12. Luke the Physician appears to separate the two healings.)

III. First Encounter: Mark 2:6-12

Mark 2:6-12

6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

NIV

Not everyone is satisfied with Jesus' actions

Verse 6: The home was surrounded by a crowd. Perhaps they could see or hear what was happening inside the home, or perhaps some were in the home. According to Luke 5:17, these teachers were dispatched from Jerusalem to check up on Jesus.

Verse 7: Of course, the teachers were half right, but also half wrong. Only God can forgive sins, but Jesus is God! Blaspheming is punishable by death:

Lev 24:16

16 anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.

NIV

Verse 8: How did Jesus know what they were thinking? The process is not identified...but He is God. The word for know is "*epiginosko*," which is the intimated knowledge that is used only between man and God.

Verse 10: If we want to be nice to the teachers, we would note that anyone can say that sins are forgiven without doing anything else, including healing.

Verse 10: This is Jesus' first use of "Son of Man." He is referring to:

Dan 7:13-14

13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man , coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

NIV

While He is God, this reference would imply only that He has been given authority by God to forgive sin. Of course, who but God can forgive sins? And who else is worthy of worship? No where else in Mark (or the Synoptic Gospels) is it noted that the Son of Man can forgive sins.

Verse 12: The man is healed and carries his mat immediately on hearing Jesus' words. The crowds are amazed again.

Verse 12: What did the teachers of the law think now? Since the man is walking, they might have had to recognize that Jesus' forgiveness of sin had been effective.

IV. Second Encounter: Mark 2:13-17

Mark 2:13-17

13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. **14** As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. **15** While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. **16** When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" **17** On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

NIV

The counterparts are Mathew 9:14-17 and Luke 5:33-39.

Verse 13: Perhaps, Jesus left to get away from the teachers or temporarily from some of the crowd. In any case, he is followed by many people. After healings and crowd interactions, we often see Jesus removing Himself from the crowds to be by Himself or with only His immediate disciples. Why? (See Mark 6:31)

Verse 14: Levi is usually considered to be the same as Matthew. As a taxpayer, he gave up his livelihood in an instant to follow Jesus.

Luke 14:33

33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

NIV

Verse 16: Remember that the tax collectors were often considered to be traitors in Jewish society as they made money by cheating Jews and were part of the Roman system. At this point, the Pharisees might not yet be critical of Jesus. They would have seen Him teach with authority and power, as one who knew the Scriptures backwards and forward. They might actually have this question in mind.

Verse 17: A great verse, worthy of memorization. What does Jesus mean by it? For this occasion, the Pharisees' questions appear to end, but they will continue to follow Him as the next verse verifies.

V. Third Encounter: Mark 2:18-22

Mark 2:18-22

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. **20** But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. **21** "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. **22** And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

NIV

The counterparts for Mark 2:18-28 are: Matthew 8:14-17 and Luke 4:38-41.

Verse 18: What answer would you give for them not fasting?

Verse 19: Jesus points out that there is no need for His disciples to fast.

Verse 20: In times of disaster, Jews fasted. "Taken from" is from the same Greek word used in the Septuagint translation of Isa. 53:8, indicating the violent death of Jesus.

Verse 20: Should Christians fast today? Of course, the bridegroom is once again not separated from Christians.

Verse 21: If an unshrunk cloth is sewed on an old garment, the patch will shrink when washed and will be inadequate as a patch. Jesus represents something new to Judaism (and the rest of the world)

Verse 32: As the new wine emits gases through additional fermentation, the wineskin expands. If it is a brittle old wineskin, it will split open.

The point of all three examples (fasting, patch, wineskin) is that it is not appropriate to force OT ways onto the NT. Jesus represents a change in the universe, and all must be renewed through Him

VI. Fourth Encounter: Mark 2:23-28

Mark 2:23-28

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. 24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

NIV

- Verse 23: Normally, it would have been acceptable to gather/gleam grain in the way that the disciples were doing per Deut. 23:25. However, on the Sabbath according to Jewish traditions, this "gathering" of grain was considered work...which made it wrong.
- Verse 24: Again, according to the traditions, the Pharisees were correct! There were actually 39 categories of actions that the Pharisees had documented as breaking the law of the Sabbath. There is no other way to view the accusations of being unlawful as being anything other than the Pharisees being critical of Jesus and His disciples.
- Verse 25: What did Jesus mean by "Have you never read"? The Jews knew their traditions, but these traditions did not always reflect Scriptures. Basically, traditions add to Scriptures to the point that they can obfuscate them.
- Verse 25: Without arguing that His innocent disciples had not broken the true law, Jesus uses an example from the OT (1 Sam. 21:1-6) in verses 25-26 showing that it was proper to use "break" the law if a greater good is served.
- Verse 25: There are a couple of difficulties with this passage. First, Jesus points out that David had companions. No companions were indicated in 1 Samuel, although he had the chance to bring some with him.
- Verse 26: The second difficulty is listing Abiathar as the high priest. Notice that the reference of "in the days of" is a general reference and is therefore generally correct. The 1 Samuel passage listed his father, Ahimelech, as High Priest. However, in the OT passage, Ahimelech dies at the command of Saul; Abiathar escapes and joins David as his band's priest. If this was not adequate to make him High Priest, he would become one later when David became king. (NOTE: Some scholars believe that Abiathar might have written portions of 1&2 Samuel although the evidence is somewhat scanty for the belief.)
- Verse 27: The Pharisees were so far into their legalism, they had overlooked the true purpose of the Sabbath.
- Verse 28: Is it wrong to work on the Sabbath today? Is it wrong to work on Sunday?

Did you notice how the Pharisees are becoming more critical of Jesus, and how Jesus is becoming more critical of them? This will boil over into stronger actions on the parts of both parties next week in 3:1-6.