

**TUTORIAL**  
**1.42**

# Jesus had power to heal & forgive. Jewish leaders plotted to kill

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Mark 2:1-17, 3:1-19.**

## Last time

A religious leader called Nicodemus visited Jesus under the cover of darkness. Jesus declared that for someone to be one of God's people they have to be born again. When Nicodemus was confused, Jesus explained that this is something the Holy Spirit does, using God's Word in the heart of a person who believes. He stated that God had sent Him into the world because of His love for all people. He wants them to believe in His Son and receive eternal life rather than face the destruction they deserve for their sin.

## A paralysed man is let down to Jesus through the roof

Let's continue with God's Narrative of the remarkable life and work of Jesus, God's Son, this time some incidents recorded in Mark's account. After travelling to a number of different communities in the area, Jesus returns to the town of Capernaum, which will be something of a base for Him and His followers for the next couple of years. (Mark 2:1-12) The news quickly spreads around the town. Jesus is back again. A few people come to the house where He's staying. He sits and talks with them, probably in a room off the inner courtyard. Soon there are far too many people for casual conversation. He speaks to the whole group, explaining the teachings of the prophets, making it clear. And like when he was here before, in the synagogue, it's done with such quiet authority. No one else comes even close to explaining God's Word like this. Certainly not the religious leaders who are here checking things out. They're not looking happy. By now the house is absolutely crammed full. Even the doorway and entrance to the house is crowded.

There's a commotion outside but no one gets up to see what it is. They're captivated by His words. But what is going on up there, on the roof? That loud thumping and cracking noise? Oh, they're making a hole. Sunlight is coming in.

Dust and powdered plaster are falling on everyone. “Jesus, don’t stop, finish what you were saying. We’re still listening”. Hands make the hole bigger, breaking the sticks and thorn-bush, the mortar and earth the roof is made of. They’re letting something down through the hole with ropes. It’s that paralysed man. Now he’s right in front of Jesus. His friends’ faces looking down, dirty and covered in plaster but expectant, “Please Master, heal him. We know you can”.

Jesus looks up at them, then down at the paralysed man. But He doesn’t heal him, at least not yet. He says, “My child, your sins are forgiven”. The teachers of religious law appear outraged and from what Jesus says he obviously knows they’re thinking, “This is blasphemy, only God can forgive sins.” Jesus doesn’t contradict this, but He asserts that He does have the authority to forgive sins. Why? Because He is God’s Son. And now He demonstrates that He is God, the Creator. He turns back to the man and tells him to get up. Which the man promptly does. He grabs the mat he’s laid on for so many years and walks out. People’s jaws are literally hanging open. Then everyone is talking at once. “Praise the name of Yahweh.” “Did you see that?” “He hasn’t walked for years!” “Incredible!” “Could this be the One?”

## **Jesus goes to the house of a tax collector who becomes his follower**

Later, near the lake, Jesus sees a tax collector sitting in his booth alongside the road, ready to collect duties from farmers, merchants and caravans. Like others who’ve chosen this way of making money, he is a despised figure in the community...a collaborator with the enemy, dishonestly adding to people’s already heavy tax burden, and regularly coming into contact with unclean Gentiles. No one concerned with his popularity, of building a reputation and following as a Rabbi, would have anything to do with a man like this. Incredibly, Jesus invites him to become one of His disciples. (Mark 2:13-17) The tax collector, Levi, walks away from his secure, lucrative business and follows Jesus.

Whether through previous encounters with Jesus we don’t know, but Levi has understood and agreed with God’s true perspective that he is a sinner and that his only hope is to trust in Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Deliverer. Later to be known as Matthew, he would write an account – a Gospel or Good News - about the life of Jesus. We have, of course, already followed some of his account.

That evening Jesus and His close followers are eating dinner at Levi’s house along with other tax collectors and what the text calls “disreputable sinners”. The Jewish religious leaders, Pharisees, are incredulous and outraged. How can He eat with people like that? The scum of the earth! They, of course, are meticulous in observing the rules and traditions, many of which have been added to God’s Law given to Moses. They wouldn’t dream of eating a meal

with those kinds of people...for one thing, according to their own nitpicking dogma, that would make them ceremonially unclean.

Jesus' response challenges their proud assumptions: the only people who go to the doctor are those who know they're sick. Similarly, it's only people who know they're sinners who can recognise Him, the Deliverer, as the only possible way their sin-debt can be dealt with. Those who think they're acceptable to God because of their own efforts are not interested in being saved. For them He doesn't represent Good News.

## **The religious leaders become actively hostile toward Jesus**

As Jesus' teaching exposes their hypocrisy and lack of real insights into God's Word, and as people flock to Him in ever larger crowds, the religious leaders' antagonism toward Him grows. They're hoping He'll violate their religious law so that they can accuse Him. (Mark 3:1-6) It's the Sabbath. Jesus is at the synagogue. There's also a man there with a deformed hand. The religious leaders are watching like hawks because if Jesus heals him they're going to claim that it's *work*, a violation of the Sabbath. They'll have Him. They can accuse Him of breaking God's Law.

Jesus knows what they're thinking but He's not going to be deterred from doing God's will by their oral traditions and legalistic interpretation of the Law – their obsession with the letter of the law while completely missing God's intent. Standing with the handicapped man in front of them He poses questions to them about the actual purpose for the Sabbath in the Mosaic Law. In essence, is it about doing good, saving life - for example, healing this man's hand? Or, did God intend the day to be about doing evil, like letting someone suffer? Or perhaps plotting to kill Jesus on the Sabbath....? They don't respond. Jesus is angered the text says and, "deeply saddened by their hard hearts". Although knowing the details of God's Story, these religious leaders are unwilling for God to be their Storyteller.

Their hearts are hard in the sense that they are entirely committed to their own assumptions about God and themselves. Even though God's Son is standing there before them, they won't humble themselves enough to recognise Him. They are set in their opposition. Even when the man's hand is healed at one word from Jesus, they aren't willing to see this evidence that He comes from God, that He *is* God's Son. They miss the fact that His Word is just as powerful to heal as it was to speak the entire universe into existence. Far from being humbled, Mark reports that the Pharisees immediately go and conspire with supporters of King Herod about how they can kill Jesus. The religious elitist Pharisees normally despise these politically pragmatic advocates for a Herodian kingship. But in this case their growing concern about Jesus' populist appeal and their resentment at his teaching joins them in an unholy alliance.

## Crowds of people come to Jesus; he chooses 12 apostles

And indeed they have cause to be insecure about their hold on the masses. Mark records how people are now coming to see Jesus from all over Palestine and from surrounding areas as far north as modern day Lebanon. They crowd around Him, in ever increasing numbers. Everyone wants to see these miracles they've heard about. The sick want to be healed. In every way He demonstrates God's character: by the truth that He speaks, the patient compassion that He shows for the needy and, of course, through the powerful miracles he performs. The evil spirits recognise Him - they shriek out that He is the Son of God. But He won't have His identity made known by the forces of darkness. He forbids them to say who He is. (Mark 3:11-19)

From among His many followers, Jesus chooses 12 men to be His close companions, His special disciples. He intends to equip them and delegate His authority to them. They are not particularly well-educated, wealthy or influential men that He now calls His *apostles*. In the same way that He was sent by God, these apostles, or messengers, would be His *sent ones*.

Jesus has come into the world to defeat God's Enemy and He has already begun the conquest. He is preparing to deliver the *coup de grâce* – the finishing blow. But He also graciously allows His true followers to fight with Him in the battle. This is consistent with the character of God we've seen in the Narrative many times, beginning with Adam's caretaking role in the newly created earth. He equips those who trust His leadership, he gives them genuine responsibility, and He *sends* them out to play a significant role in His purposes. It's worth noting that one of the 12 apostles is Judas Iscariot. The other men who'll be Judas' companions for the next couple of years don't know what he is really like. Jesus, who of course knows everyone's hearts, can see everything going on with Judas, and knows that he'll eventually betray Him. But, humbly submitting to God's guidance, He includes Judas now as one of His close companions.



### DISCUSSION POINTS

*Jesus had power to heal and forgive. Jewish leaders plotted to kill*

1. One dictionary definition for *forgive* is “to stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense, flaw, or

mistake.” Based on what we’ve learned so far about the character of God, how is this consistent or inconsistent with His forgiveness of sins? In light of that, explain the basis on which Jesus declared the crippled man’s sins forgiven.

2. Mark describes Jesus being angered by the attitudes of the Jewish religious leaders. We know that Jesus completely lived up to God’s perfect standards in every way, so how was His anger consistent with God’s character? What do you think was the reason for His feelings and why were they not wrong? Do you think that there is any context in which we, likewise, can be righteously angry, or is that a contradiction?
3. The Narrative does not give many clues, but knowing what we do about God’s character, how do you think Jesus would have related to Judas? Do you think that, just like everyone else, He would have been genuinely offering Judas the opportunity to repent and put His faith in him or, knowing the future, would Jesus internally have already written him off as a lost cause?



## ACTIVITIES

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1. Do some research about houses in Bible times.