

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Session 4, Leprosy, Paralyzed Man Forgiven (Mark 1:40-2:17) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Jennings, Mark, Session 4, Leprosy, Paralyzed Man Forgiven (Mark 1:40-2:17), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mark Jennings' lecture focuses on the continuation of Jesus' public ministry as depicted in Mark 1:40-2:17. The lecture highlights Jesus' authority through accounts of healing a leper and forgiving a paralytic's sins, demonstrating his power over both physical ailments and spiritual impurity. **The healing of the leper** illustrates Jesus' compassion and how his holiness supersedes ritualistic contamination, while **the healing of the paralytic** connects physical healing with the authority to forgive sins, sparking controversy with religious leaders. Furthermore, the lecture examines **the calling of Levi (Matthew) and Jesus' subsequent meal with tax collectors and sinners**, emphasizing Jesus' mission to the marginalized and challenging the social norms of the time regarding purity and association. **Growing tension** between Jesus and the religious authorities is noted as a developing theme.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Jennings, Mark, Session 4 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Gospels → Mark).



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3. Briefing Document: Jennings, Mark, Session 4, Leprosy, Paralyzed Man Forgiven (Mark 1:40-2:17)

Briefing Document: Dr. Mark Jennings on Mark 1:40-2:17 - The Public Ministry Continues

Subject: Analysis of Mark 1:40-2:17: Jesus' Authority, Purity Laws, Healing of the Paralytic, and the Call of Levi

This briefing document summarizes the key themes and important ideas discussed by Dr. Mark Jennings in his fourth lecture on the Gospel of Mark, focusing on Mark 1:40-2:17, titled "The Public Ministry Continues." The lecture highlights the continued demonstration of Jesus' authority through miracles and teachings, his interaction with societal outcasts and the implications for purity laws, the profound healing of the paralytic and its connection to forgiveness of sins, and the controversial call of Levi and Jesus' subsequent meal with "sinners and tax collectors."

I. The Healing of the Leper (Mark 1:40-45)

- **Context of Leprosy:** Dr. Jennings clarifies that "leprosy" in biblical times likely encompassed various skin diseases causing flesh decay, not just Hansen's disease. This condition carried a significant social and religious stigma.
- "Now, leprosy here in biblical times probably referred to a number of skin diseases, not just what we call Hansen's disease today. But it would have been diseases that especially were marked by flesh dying away or decaying or some sort of rot being put in."
- **Ceremonial Impurity:** Lepers were considered ceremonially impure in Second Temple Judaism, equating to a state of "living death." This impurity led to social isolation and the requirement to announce their unclean state upon approaching others.
- "So, a leper, by definition, was ceremonially impure. What this meant for a leper in the Jewish community at this time was they would be separated from family and friends, and there would be no social interaction."
- **The Leper's Boldness and Faith:** The leper's act of approaching Jesus was itself a transgression of social norms, demonstrating a "kinetic display of faith." His plea, "if you are willing, you can make me clean," highlights his understanding of his ritual uncleanness and focuses the uncertainty on Jesus' will, not his ability.

- "And that is consistent with what we see in the Gospel of Mark, which is that great acts of coming to Jesus often require a kinetic display of faith, a muscular act."
- "Notice, first of all, it's not healed. It's clean because he understood that he was in a state of uncleanness, according to the Jewish ritual law. But even the phrasing is fascinating... the uncertainty is, will Jesus choose to do it or not do it? Not. Can Jesus do it or not?"
- **Jesus' Compassion and Defiance of Purity Laws:** Jesus' act of touching the leper before healing him is significant. It demonstrates his compassion and, more importantly, subverts the prevailing understanding of purity. Instead of Jesus becoming impure, his holiness cleanses the leper.
- "Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. I am willing, he said, be clean."
- "Again, holy and unholy do not mix. Clean and unclean do not mix. But with Jesus, it is the holiness, the cleanness, if you will, the purity of Jesus that is the contagious factor."
- **Jesus' Instruction and the Leper's Disobedience:** Jesus instructs the healed man to remain silent and show himself to the priest as a testimony to his cleansing, fulfilling Mosaic law for reintegration into the community. However, the man disobeys and spreads the news, hindering Jesus' ability to enter towns openly.
- "Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning, see that you don't tell this to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing as a testimony to them."
- "Instead, he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly..."
- **Themes Emerging:** This episode reinforces Jesus' authority and ability to heal. It also introduces the theme of purity and impurity, ritualistic law, and Jesus' relationship to them, setting the stage for future conflicts.

II. The Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)

- **Return to Capernaum and Overcrowding:** Jesus returns to Capernaum, and a large crowd gathers, preventing access to him. This highlights a recurring motif in Mark where crowds obstruct access to Jesus.
- "A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum... So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them."
- "I always find it interesting, one of the characteristics of the crowds, if you will, in the Gospel of Mark, is they get in the way. They block doorways. They are constantly preventing people, if you will, from getting to Jesus..."
- **The Faith of the Four Men:** Four men demonstrate remarkable faith and determination by digging through the roof to lower their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Dr. Jennings emphasizes that it is their actions, their "muscular faith," that are highlighted.
- "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."
- "When Jesus saw their faith... so he's talking about the whole group, their faith, their trust, their willingness to get around the obstacles to get to Jesus..."
- **Jesus' Declaration of Forgiveness:** Jesus' first words to the paralytic are, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Dr. Jennings argues that this is a deliberate act, indicating Jesus' authority extends beyond physical healing to the forgiveness of sins.
- "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven."
- "I think this statement is important, going back to our idea that Jesus is very deliberate in his actions when he does something miraculous. He did not need to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' to heal this man. He chose to say, 'Your sins are forgiven.'"
- **Theological Implications of Forgiveness:** Dr. Jennings touches upon the understanding in Second Temple Judaism that suffering could be linked to sin. However, he posits that Jesus' statement addresses the broader issue of sin as the root cause of all physical ailments since the Fall, rather than a specific sin committed by the paralytic.

- "But rather that all physical ailments of any sort are the result of sin. When God created, and the world was good, it was without sin. But when sin entered into the world through the transgressions of Adam and Eve... when sin entered, so came death and the decaying of the world. And so, in a lot of ways, this paralysis is anybody's sickness..."
- **The Scribes' Accusation of Blasphemy:** The teachers of the law rightly recognize that only God can forgive sins and consider Jesus' statement blasphemous.
- "Now, some teachers of the law were sitting there thinking to themselves, why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
- **Jesus' Demonstration of Authority:** Jesus, knowing their thoughts (another display of divine-like authority), poses a rhetorical question about which is easier to say – "Your sins are forgiven" or "Get up, take your mat, and walk." He then heals the paralytic to demonstrate his authority to forgive sins. The physical healing serves as visible proof of his spiritual authority.
- "Immediately, Jesus knew in his spirit that this is what they were thinking in their hearts... Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up, take your mat, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins... I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home."
- "The miracle serves the statement, and your sins are forgiven."
- **The Crowd's Amazement:** The complete and immediate healing astounds the crowd, leading them to praise God and acknowledge the unprecedented nature of what they have witnessed.
- "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."

III. The Call of Levi and Eating with Sinners (Mark 2:13-17)

- **The Call of Levi:** Jesus calls Levi, the son of Alphaeus, a tax collector, to follow him. This call mirrors the calls of the other disciples, emphasizing that Levi's calling and response are not substantially different. Dr. Jennings notes the possible identification of Levi with Matthew in other Gospels and the likelihood of him having a double name. The mention of James, son of Alphaeus, alongside

Levi suggests they might have been brothers, continuing the pattern of calling pairs of brothers.

- "As he walked along, he saw Levi's son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax collector's booth. Follow me. Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him."
- "Levi doesn't get a distinctly different call. He gets the same call, the same summary, follow me, and the same response. Levi got up and followed him."
- **The Social Stigma of Tax Collectors:** Tax collectors were highly despised in Jewish society, considered traitors and often equated with murderers and thieves due to their perceived exploitation and collaboration with Roman authorities.
- "They were despised individuals and considered traitors. The Talmud, for example, lists tax collectors among murderers and thieves in terms of the types of harm they did to people."
- **Jesus' Table Fellowship with "Sinners and Tax Collectors":** Jesus dines at Levi's house with many tax collectors and "sinners." Dr. Jennings discusses the significance of table fellowship in the ancient world, which conveyed honor and shame. Eating with those considered socially and religiously impure would have been shocking.
- "While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples..."
- "Table fellowship conveyed honor and shame. Who you ate with was a declaration of your value, of your worth, of your honor, or conversely of your shame, of your lowliness."
- **Defining "Sinners":** Dr. Jennings suggests that the phrase "tax collectors and sinners" might not simply mean tax collectors and other random individuals who sin. He proposes that "sinners" in this context could refer to those whose professions were inherently considered sinful in that culture, such as those who inflicted physical harm or prostitutes, aligning them with the despised status of tax collectors.
- "That a tax collector's vocation was, by definition, considered a sinful vocation... I wonder if that is what is happening here, that this sinners group... is comprised of people who, by definition of their vocation would have been considered sinners."

- **The Pharisees' Criticism:** The Pharisees question Jesus' disciples about why he eats with such people, viewing it as inappropriate and a challenge to social and religious boundaries. This highlights the growing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders.
- "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?"
- **Jesus' Defense:** Jesus responds with a proverb: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." He asserts that his mission is to those who are spiritually unwell and in need of help, even if it means transgressing social norms and challenging traditional interpretations of purity. He implies that the Pharisees, in their self-righteousness, do not recognize their own need for him.
- "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 the sinners."

Conclusion:

Dr. Jennings' analysis of Mark 1:40-2:17 reveals the multifaceted nature of Jesus' early public ministry. His authority is consistently displayed through powerful healings and profound pronouncements. These actions, however, increasingly bring him into conflict with the religious establishment as he challenges their understanding of purity, sin, and his own Messianic role. The inclusion of outcasts like the leper and Levi, and Jesus' willingness to associate with "sinners," underscores his radical approach and the inclusive nature of his mission. The lecture sets the stage for further exploration of the growing tensions and the deepening understanding of Jesus' identity and purpose in the Gospel of Mark.

4. Study Guide: Jennings, Mark, Session 4, Leprosy, Paralyzed Man Forgiven (Mark 1:40-2:17)

Study Guide: Mark 1:40-2:17 - The Public Ministry Continues

Key Themes:

- **Jesus' Authority:** Demonstrated through healings, forgiveness of sins, and the calling of disciples.
- **Purity and Impurity:** Exploring the Jewish ritual laws surrounding uncleanness (specifically leprosy) and Jesus' interaction with them.
- **Compassion and Action:** Jesus' empathetic response to suffering and his willingness to transgress social and ritual boundaries.
- **Faith and Obstacles:** The active faith of individuals and their companions in reaching Jesus despite hindrances.
- **Conflict with Religious Leaders:** The growing tension between Jesus' actions and the interpretations of the Law by the scribes and Pharisees.
- **The Nature of Sin and Forgiveness:** Jesus' claim to forgive sins and its implications.
- **Table Fellowship:** The social and religious significance of who one eats with in the ancient world.

Quiz:

1. Describe the significance of Jesus touching the leper in Mark 1:40-45. Why was this action unexpected, and what does it reveal about Jesus?
2. Explain the social implications of leprosy in the time of Jesus based on the lecture. How were lepers treated within the Jewish community?
3. In the story of the paralyzed man (Mark 2:1-12), what was the initial issue that brought the man to Jesus, and what surprising statement did Jesus make?
4. Why did the teachers of the law accuse Jesus of blasphemy when he told the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven"? What was their understanding of who had the authority to forgive sins?
5. How did Jesus respond to the accusations of the teachers of the law regarding his forgiveness of the paralytic's sins? What was the purpose of healing the man?

6. Describe the profession of Levi (also known as Matthew) and why tax collectors were generally despised in Jewish society during this time.
7. Why were the Pharisees critical of Jesus eating with tax collectors and "sinners"? What did table fellowship signify in that cultural context?
8. According to Jesus, why did he associate with "sinners"? What analogy did he use to explain his actions?
9. What does the lecture suggest about the possible composition of the group referred to as "sinners" who were eating with Jesus and his disciples?
10. How does the calling of Levi compare to the calling of the first disciples (Simon, Andrew, James, and John) as presented in Mark's Gospel?

Answer Key:

1. Touching the leper was unexpected because ritual purity laws dictated that contact with an unclean person would make one unclean. This action reveals Jesus' compassion and demonstrates that his holiness is more powerful than ritual impurity, cleansing the leper instead of Jesus becoming defiled.
2. Lepers were considered ceremonially impure and were socially isolated, separated from family and friends. They had to announce their unclean state to avoid contact with others due to the belief that impurity was contagious.
3. The paralyzed man was brought to Jesus because he could not walk. Jesus surprisingly stated, "Son, your sins are forgiven," addressing a spiritual need before the physical one.
4. The teachers of the law accused Jesus of blasphemy because they believed that only God had the authority to forgive sins. Jesus, by claiming to forgive sins, was seemingly equating himself with God.
5. Jesus responded by asking which was easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or "Get up, take your mat, and walk," and then healed the paralytic to demonstrate his authority to forgive sins. The healing served as visible proof of his divine authority.
6. Levi was a tax collector, likely a customs official. Tax collectors were despised because they were seen as collaborators with the Roman authorities, often extorting money from their fellow Jews for personal gain.

7. The Pharisees criticized Jesus because eating with "sinners" and tax collectors was seen as associating with impure and dishonorable people, which would lower Jesus' own social standing and challenge the prevailing notions of purity. Table fellowship was a significant indicator of social acceptance and shared values.
8. Jesus stated that he associated with "sinners" because "it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." He presented himself as a spiritual physician who came to help those who recognized their need for healing.
9. The lecture suggests that the term "sinners" in this context likely referred to those whose professions were considered inherently sinful in that culture, such as other tax collectors, possibly those involved in violence, or prostitutes, rather than just a general group of people who sin.
10. The calling of Levi is presented in a similar manner to the calling of the first disciples. Jesus simply says, "Follow me," and Levi immediately gets up and follows him, indicating Jesus' direct authority and Levi's immediate obedience, mirroring the responses of the other disciples.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of the healing of the leper (Mark 1:40-45) in the context of Jesus' public ministry as presented in the lecture. How does this event demonstrate Jesus' authority and challenge prevailing social and religious norms?
2. Discuss the interaction between Jesus and the teachers of the law in the story of the paralyzed man (Mark 2:1-12). What theological claims does Jesus make, and how does this encounter contribute to the growing tension in Mark's narrative?
3. Explore the social and religious implications of Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors and "sinners" (Mark 2:13-17). How does this practice reflect Jesus' mission and challenge the established social hierarchy and purity codes of his time?
4. Compare and contrast the different ways Jesus' authority is demonstrated in the healing of the leper and the healing of the paralytic. What do these two accounts reveal about the nature of Jesus' power and his approach to human suffering?
5. Evaluate the significance of the calling of Levi in the context of Jesus gathering his disciples. How does this event, particularly the background of Levi's profession, contribute to our understanding of Jesus' mission and the composition of his followers?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Authority:** The power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. In the context of Jesus, it refers to his divine power and right to teach, heal, and forgive sins.
- **Blasphemy:** The act or offense of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things. The teachers of the law accused Jesus of blasphemy when he claimed to forgive sins.
- **Ceremonial Impurity:** A state of ritual uncleanness according to Jewish Law that required specific purification rites. Leprosy was considered a significant source of ceremonial impurity.
- **Compassion:** A feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is suffering, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain. Mark highlights Jesus' compassion in the healing of the leper.
- **Exorcism:** The expulsion or attempted expulsion of a supposed evil spirit from a person or place. Mark presents Jesus performing exorcisms as a demonstration of his authority over evil.
- **Healing:** The process of becoming sound or healthy again after injury or illness. Jesus performed numerous healings as a sign of his power and compassion.
- **Leprosy:** In the biblical context, likely referred to various skin diseases causing decay and was associated with ceremonial impurity and social isolation.
- **Paralytic:** A person who is partially or totally incapable of movement in one or more limbs. The healing of the paralytic demonstrates Jesus' authority to both heal and forgive sins.
- **Purity Laws:** Religious rules and regulations concerning ritual cleanliness and uncleanness in Jewish tradition. These laws governed various aspects of life, including disease, death, and food.
- **Scribes:** Jewish scholars and teachers of the Law. They were often concerned with the interpretation and application of the Mosaic Law.
- **Sin:** An immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law. Jesus' ability to forgive sins was a central point of contention with the religious leaders.
- **Son of Man:** A title Jesus used for himself, often in contexts related to his authority and future glory.

- **Table Fellowship:** The act of sharing a meal with others, which held significant social and religious meaning in the ancient world, indicating acceptance and shared values.
- **Tax Collector:** An individual who collected taxes on behalf of the Roman authorities. They were generally despised by the Jewish population.
- **Testimony:** A formal statement or account of evidence. Jesus instructed the healed leper to show himself to the priest as a testimony to them of his cleansing.

5. FAQs on Jennings, Mark, Session 4, Leprosy, Paralyzed Man Forgiven (Mark 1:40-2:17), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Mark 1:40-2:17

1. What is the primary focus highlighted in the initial chapters of Mark's Gospel, specifically up to the events discussed in this lecture? The primary focus in the initial chapters of Mark's Gospel is the authority of Jesus. This is demonstrated through various means, including his powerful calling of the disciples who immediately obey, his teaching which possesses an authority unlike that of the scribes, his successful exorcisms where demons instantly submit to his command, and his complete healing miracles, such as the restoration of Peter's mother-in-law. This theme of Jesus as the stronger one with ultimate authority guides the narrative, particularly in the first eight chapters.

2. Why does the healing of the leper in Mark 1:40-45 receive specific attention, and what does it reveal about Jesus? The healing of the leper is significant because it illustrates several key aspects of Jesus' ministry. First, the leper's approach demonstrates a remarkable act of faith, defying social norms for those with his condition. Second, Jesus' willingness to touch the leper, despite the ritual impurity associated with leprosy in Jewish tradition, showcases his compassion and challenges the prevailing understanding of purity and impurity. Instead of Jesus becoming unclean, his holiness cleanses the leper, indicating that his purity is the stronger force. Furthermore, the event continues to emphasize Jesus' authority, as his spoken word immediately results in the man's healing.

3. What was the social and religious significance of leprosy in the context of Second Temple Judaism? In Second Temple Judaism, leprosy, likely encompassing various skin diseases causing decay, carried a strong sense of ceremonial impurity, akin to contact with death. Death was considered impure, and this impurity was contagious. As a result, lepers were socially isolated, separated from family and community, and were required to declare their unclean state upon approaching others. The prevailing belief was that holiness and unholiness could not mix, and contact with the unclean would defile the clean.

4. In the story of the paralyzed man in Mark 2:1-12, why does Jesus first declare, "Your sins are forgiven"? Jesus' declaration of forgiveness to the paralyzed man before healing him physically was deliberate and served multiple purposes. Firstly, there was a common belief in that time that suffering could be a consequence of sin. While Jesus doesn't affirm a direct link to a specific sin of the man, he addresses the root cause of all physical ailments, which entered the world through sin. Secondly, by forgiving his sins, Jesus is making a profound claim about his own authority, as the forgiveness of sins was understood to be something only God could do. This sets the stage for the challenge from the teachers of the law who accuse him of blasphemy.

5. How does the healing of the paralyzed man demonstrate Jesus' authority beyond physical healing? The healing of the paralyzed man goes beyond just a physical restoration; it serves as a tangible demonstration of Jesus' authority to forgive sins. By linking the two, Jesus answers the unspoken question of whether he has the power to forgive sins. He essentially argues that if he can miraculously heal a man who could not walk, then his declaration of forgiveness is equally effective. Furthermore, Jesus' ability to know the thoughts of the teachers of the law ("Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this is what they were thinking in their hearts") underscores his divine-like knowledge and authority.

6. Why was the calling of Levi (Matthew) and Jesus' subsequent meal with tax collectors and "sinners" controversial? The calling of Levi, a tax collector, was surprising because tax collectors were generally despised in Jewish society. They were seen as collaborators with the Roman authorities and were often accused of extortion. For Jesus to call such a figure as a disciple challenged social norms and expectations. Furthermore, Jesus' decision to eat with tax collectors and "sinners" at Levi's house was deeply controversial because table fellowship in that culture signified acceptance and shared values. The Pharisees questioned why Jesus, who was perceived as a religious teacher, would associate with those considered morally and religiously unclean.

7. How does Jesus defend his actions of eating with tax collectors and sinners in Mark 2:17? Jesus defends his actions by using a common proverb: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." He explains that his mission is to those who recognize their need for spiritual healing, those who are outside the bounds of what was considered righteous in that society. He implies that the "righteous" (in this context, likely those who believed they were already morally upright, such as the Pharisees) do not see their need for him, while the "sinners" do. This response highlights Jesus' focus on reaching out to the marginalized and those considered lost.

8. What does the growing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders, as seen in these passages, foreshadow for the rest of Mark's Gospel? The growing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders, particularly their questioning of his authority to forgive sins and their criticism of his association with those deemed impure, foreshadows increasing opposition to Jesus' ministry. These early conflicts hint at the fundamental differences in their understanding of God's will, righteousness, and the nature of the Messiah. This rising tension will continue to escalate throughout Mark's Gospel, ultimately leading to the events surrounding Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion.