

MARK'S GOSPEL STUDY 3. NOTES FOR LEADERS

1. Have you ever been so sick or injured that you were totally dependent on others? What happened? What was it like?
2. **Read Mark 2:1-12**
Notice the hints that are given about the friends who carried the paralytic. What can we assume about them and what does the passage tell us about them?

We assume that they were close and concerned friends, but the passage also tells us that they were innovative and determined in that they were not put off by the crowd. Lead the group to discover that it was the faith of the four friends to which Jesus responded (verse 5).

3. **Do you have a close friend that you would love to see come closer to Jesus? What is it that prevents that process from occurring?**
 - a. They never seem to show interest.
 - b. I don't want to push my faith down their throat.
 - c. I'm not too sure how to share my faith.
 - d. I'm not too sure my friend would enjoy our church services.
 - e. Some other reason.
4. **a. The sermon talks about more than one form of paralysis. What may cause you to 'freeze'?**
 - i. Difficulties at work or at home?
 - ii. When asked to speak in public?
 - iii. Injections, the dentist, etc.
 - iv. Thinking about the past?
 - v. Thinking about the future?
 - vi. Fears associated life transitions? (Children leaving home, retiring, grandchildren arriving, etc)
 - b. What are you doing about these fears?
 - c. What would you like to do about them?
5. **Why does Jesus tell the paralysed man that his sins are forgiven? Why not start with healing him of his affliction? What is his greatest need at this time?**

*Firstly, for the Hebrew there is an association of suffering and sin, so Jesus would have been addressing the perception that the man or his parents were sinners and that was why he was disabled. We see Jesus meeting the deepest need of the man before he can meet the physical need. His greatest need is to hear the word of forgiveness for real and imagined sins.
Secondly, Jesus would have been aware of how this could have been interpreted by the Pharisees. He was claiming an authority that normally would be attributed to God alone. The use of "Son of man" strengthens this interpretation.*

6. **What do you know about the Scribes and the Pharisees? Why did Jesus clash with them?**

Jesus' beliefs, at points, overlapped with the Pharisees, eg Resurrection. However, Jesus would have disagreed with their views that made the general law a maze of technical subtleties and also with their strict apartheid views regarding gentiles, tax collectors etc. The Pharisees would not have stressed the relationship aspect of religion, as God to them was a God of law. They would have really struggled with the indirect claims of divinity reported in Mark's Gospel.

7. Skim read Mark Chapters 2 and 3.

- a. What are the problems here that Jesus has with the Scribes and Pharisees?
- b. What do the following passages have in common?
Mark 2:15-17, 18-19, 23-24, Mark 3:1-6, 22.
- c. What are the complaints?
- d. How does Jesus handle them?
- e. What does this tell us about Jesus?

Mark, as editor, has gathered together a series of conflict stories that involves conflict about Jesus claiming to be able to forgive, healing on the Sabbath, mixing with the wrong people. In most of these instances Jesus had broken the oral law, the law that was added in order to interpret the written law. In some of the stories, (such as the passage now being studied) the conflict is over the implicit claims of divinity, in that Jesus claimed to have the power to forgive sins. Breaking the technical requirements of the Sabbath was a frequent problem for Jesus. It was inconceivable to his opponents that he was the Son of God. The accusation of being demon possessed is because the opponents could not think of any other way that Jesus would have had the power to heal.

These passages remind us that the bearer of good news receives a negative reaction but that does not dissuade Jesus from doing what he was supposed to do. The Church should not be surprised that it receives 'flak' from time to time for doing what it is supposed to do. As individual Christians we should not be surprised when attempting to bring about healing that we also find ourselves involved in conflict.

8. Have members of the group look up Mark 2:10, 28, 8:31, 38, 9:9, 12, 31, 10:33, 45, 13:26, 14:21, 41, 62.

- a. What is the title Jesus uses of himself? Do you see any patterns?
- b. What does this title mean?
- c. What are other titles used of Jesus?
- d. Which one do you find yourself using most frequently?

In Chapter 2 Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" for the first time. There are definite patterns. Jesus used the title, his favorite self-appellation, (nobody else calls him the Son of Man) when speaking of suffering, future glory or authority. Obviously, he used it in a way that was consistent with the reference in Daniel. It is used more frequently in Mark's Gospel than the others. It is more frequent after Peter recognizes him as the Messiah (8:29) and when Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem and crucifixion. It is not used of Jesus or by Jesus after the resurrection. See more notes from Holman Bible Dictionary below.

9. See Mark 2:6, 12

Note the reaction of those who witnessed the healing. Imagine what the other reactions would have been from the following:

- a. The house owner (e.g. *what about this gaping hole in my roof?*)
- b. The four friends
- c. The Scribes
- d. The man who had been paralysed.

10. Where would you put yourself in this scene? Would you be one of the friends, the paralysed man, a part of the incredulous crowd, or would you identify most with the owner of the house?

3. NOTES FOR LEADERS

MARK 2: 1-12

This is the first of the conflict stories between Jesus and the Scribes/Pharisees found in Mark Chapters 2-3. In the 1st century, scribes and Pharisees were two largely distinct groups, though some scribes may have been Pharisees. Scribes had knowledge of the law and could draft legal documents. Pharisees were the 'professionals' who were able to interpret the written law and adapt it to the contemporary situation. They helped build up the authority of the oral law and it was usually the oral law that Jesus broke (such as washing rituals or "harvesting wheat" on the Sabbath).

The conflicts are about the prerogative to forgive sins and the implicit claim of divinity, abuse of the Sabbath, and the implication that Jesus was demon possessed. In this way Mark prepares the stage for the crucifixion of Christ.

The story for this study is the first time the term "Son of Man" is used in Mark, and the attached Holman article will help you with the background of that. In this instance the use of the title is associated with the power/authority of Jesus.

Note that while Mark is more inclined to feature the humanity of Christ than the other Gospels, this story points towards his divinity. Jesus has an awareness of what his opponents are thinking. The title "Son of Man" has divine overtones. He claims the authority to forgive sins, the prerogative of God alone.

Verse 4. The paralysed man comes to Jesus, lowered on a *krabbatov*, a mattress which was used by the poor. Luke's version (Luke 5:18-26) implies that the four friends lifted the tiles before lowering him. This is a "Latinism" as tiles would be more inclined to be found in Roman homes than Palestinian. The Marcan account speaks of the friends digging through the roof. Matthew does not mention the lowering through the roof at all (Matthew 9:2-8).

Verse 5. This verse features the faith of those who carried the man to Jesus and also carries a rather startling and unexpected statement, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Grammatically and idiomatically this can be translated as "God forgives you." Again, grammatically, it is possible to translate it, "God forgives you at this moment." In its Old Testament context healing and forgiveness were often seen as interchangeable words. (See Psalm 41:4, Jeremiah 3:22, Hosea 14:4.) Sometimes healing is a demonstration of the forgiveness of God. (See 2 Chron. 7:14, Psalm 103:3, Psalm 147:3, Is. 19:22.)

Verses 6 & 7. The conflict begins because Jesus offer of healing is tantamount to a claim to being God or is tantamount to the claim of being able to do the work of God. To quote Lane, "The Gospel of Mark", (I.C.C. Commentary, page 95), "They sensed in Jesus' declaration of forgiveness an affront to the majesty and Authority of God which is the essence of blasphemy." In essence they were reacting to Jesus claim to be able to speak for God.

Verses 10 & 11. Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" for the first time in Mark's Gospel. It is a frequent self-appellation but is more frequent after acknowledgment that Jesus is "**The Messiah**" in Chapter 8:29. It is worth pausing to discuss this term. Jesus never explains the term and it seemed to be familiar to the Jewish hearers. At times the phrase may mean, "I as a man." In the Old Testament it frequently refers to being a member of the human race. (Psalm 8:4 *What is man that Thou art mindful of him and the Son of Man that Thou dost care for him?*) Sometimes it is used to emphasise the insignificance of the prophet compared to the majesty of God. Ezekiel is addressed as "Son of Man". (Ezekiel 2:1) In the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:13) there is a reference to a **Son of Man** who will be associated with the Last Days. "*And there was given to him dominion and glory and a kingdom.*" Jesus is probably referring to this passage when he calls himself, "*The Son of Man*". The listener in Jesus' time may not see this term as a title but rather a description of manhood. They may have heard it as a link with prophecy or may have understood it as an alternative Messianic title.

Verse 12. This verse indicates that even the opponents and critics of Jesus were amazed at the happening and the healing, as Lane comments, "*The glorification of God does not mean that they thanked Him for sending Jesus or even that they recognised the relationship between Jesus' declaration of forgiveness and the actually restoration of health to the paralytic.... this mounted to the acknowledgment of the dignity of Jesus in spite of their intentions.*" (Page 99)

From Holman Bible Dictionary.

SON OF MAN New Testament designation for Jesus as God incarnate in flesh and agent of divine judgment. It occurs some 84 times in the Gospels, all but one being Jesus' self-description.

The Old Testament With the exception of Ezekiel and Daniel, the term Son of man appears in the Old Testament as a synonym for "man," "humankind" (Isa. 56:2; Jer. 50:40; Pss. 8:4; 80:17; 146:3; Job 25:6). In the Aramaic language spoken in Palestine in Jesus' day, the expression Son of man was similarly used to mean "the man," "a man," or simply "someone." The term appears in the rabbinic writings with the meaning, "a certain person."

1. Ezekiel In Ezekiel, God uses the term 90 times to address the prophet. The exact nuance of this usage is widely debated. Is the emphasis on the humanity and frailty of the prophet? It is used, perhaps, as a title to distinguish him from other men. Or, it may reveal the prophet's sense of identity with his people. In any event, the emphasis seems to be on the humanity of the prophet, a meaning which Christians also came to attach to the term when applied to Jesus.

2. Daniel The most distinctive Old Testament use of "Son of man" is in Daniel 7:13. In one of his night visions, the prophet saw "one like a son of man" (NASB) come on the clouds of heaven to appear before the throne of God. He was given dominion over all peoples and an everlasting kingdom. Scholars are divided over whether the Son of man of Daniel's vision should be seen as an angel, as the Messiah, or as all of Israel. (The latter conclusion is drawn from the fact that in Dan. 7:27 the "saints of the most High" were granted dominion over an everlasting kingdom.) Later, Jewish interpretation of Daniel 7:13, however, is at one in seeing the reference as messianic. This is true of the later apocalyptic writings such as Enoch and 2 Esdras as well as the rabbinic writings.

The New Testament The "Son of man" sayings of Jesus fall into three distinct types.

1. Apocalyptic Sayings The largest number of Son of man sayings deal with the final times when the Son of man will descend to earth to gather the elect and to judge. The picture of the Son of man in these passages is strongly reminiscent of Daniel 7:13 (quoted in Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; 22:69). The Son of man will come in glory with His angels and take His seat on His throne (Matt. 25:31). His coming will be sudden and unexpected (Matt. 10:23; 16:28; 24:27, 38-39; 24:44; Luke 17:22-27). He will come as judge to condemn the unrighteous (Matt. 13:41; 16:27; John 5:27) and to take as His own those who have faith and confess Him (Luke 12:8; 18:8; 21:36). Faithful disciples are to join the Son of man in this judgment (Matt. 19:28), which perhaps reflects the dual role of the Son of man and saints of the Most High found in Daniel 7:13,27. These sayings could be taken as referring to another than Jesus, but the Gospel writers unquestionably saw Jesus as referring to Himself and connected these events with His second coming.

2. Passion Sayings The second largest group of Son of man sayings are connected with the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Three times Jesus predicted that the Son of man would be rejected and killed by the priests and scribes but would rise on the third day (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; Luke 24:7). Just like John the Baptist, the Son of man would be treated with contempt (Mark 9:12-13; Matt. 17:12-13). He will be betrayed (Matt. 26:24,45; Luke 22:48). Death would be followed by victory, the resurrection from the dead (Matt. 17:9).

In his own way, John highlighted this dual emphasis on the humiliation of the cross and the glory of the resurrection. The Son of man is to be "lifted up" on the cross, but this "lifting up" is in reality His exaltation, leading to His ascension to the Father (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:34). As with a seed, death must first come for there to be new life, and thus Jesus' death became His hour of greatest glory (John 12:23-4; 13:31).

Nothing in Jewish messianic expectation connected the Son of man with suffering and death. In the Old Testament, one finds that only with the Servant of Isaiah 53. That connection is clearly made in this group of Son of man sayings, and it is explicitly made in Mark 10:45 (Matt. 20:28). The Son of man, the messianic Judge of the final time, is also the Suffering Servant of God. That connection is unique to the teaching and ministry of Jesus.

3. Sayings Connected with Jesus' Ministry The third group of Son of man sayings is the most heterogeneous, but all refer to some aspect of Jesus' earthly ministry. Many could be understood in

the sense of the Hebrew idiom--"a man, this man, I." Yet, all have a deeper implication than any human I, for all point to some unique quality about Jesus' ministry. Even in these sayings, "Son of man" should be seen as a title pointing to Jesus' special role. He is the One who has authority to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24) and to interpret the meaning of the sabbath (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). In His preaching, He sowed the seed of God's kingdom (Matt. 13:37), for He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Blessed is the disciple who suffers for His sake (Luke 6:22).

Some of these sayings reflect an incarnational emphasis. The Son of man in His earthly humiliation had no place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58). He was misunderstood and rejected (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34), but such personal rejection is forgivable--it is only the rejection of the work of the Spirit that is beyond forgiveness (Matt. 12:32; Luke 12:10). John's Gospel especially highlights this incarnational emphasis. The Son of man is true flesh and blood. One must accept that humanity to find true life (John 6:53). The Son of man is also Son of God, the One who came from above, the Ladder which links all humanity with God (John 1:51).

4. The Rest of the New Testament "Son of man" occurs only four times in the New Testament outside the Gospels. All four reflect understandings of the title already found in the Gospels. In Acts 7:56, Stephen beheld the ascended Son of man standing beside the throne of God to receive him. In Revelation 1:13; 14:14-16, the Son of man appears as Judge. In Hebrews 2:6, the reference to Son of man in Psalm 8:4 which originally applied to humanity in general is specifically applied to Jesus as the unique Son of man and representative of humanity. In the context of Hebrews 2, all the Gospel emphases on Son of man coalesce--a strong incarnational emphasis on His real flesh and blood, a vivid depiction of His representative suffering, and the note that by that suffering He acquires His glory and honor and leads many to glory.

Conclusion Why are there so few references to Son of man outside the Gospels? Perhaps it was not a familiar term in the Gentile churches to which most of the New Testament writings were addressed. In any event, the significance of the term was not lost, for the New Testament writers all attest to the profound teachings which this term embodies--the true humanity of the Word made flesh, the necessity of His suffering and death for salvation, the glory of His reign over an everlasting kingdom, and His final coming to judge the just and the unjust.

John Polhill. Holman Bible Dictionary