

3

The Jesus Identity

Studies in Mark's Gospel

Starter

From what you know of Mark's gospel so far, what would you say was the most important part of Jesus' ministry? (find some verses to support your view) What would you say was Jesus' mission?

So far in Mark's gospel, do any of the examples of opposition to Jesus stand out to you particularly? Why?

In our previous study Jesus declared his mission and began to act with remarkable authority. It is no surprise therefore that some embraced Jesus and that others began to oppose Jesus: a new exercise of power will always stir a reaction from incumbent powers under threat.

Read Mark 2:1-3:6

Jesus' actions now begin to draw opposition from several corners. Fill in the following table based on your reading of Mark 2:1-3:6.

	What opposition does Jesus face?	How does Jesus answer the opposition? (If you can, just quote the verse numbers)
Mk 2:1-12		
Mk 2:13-17		
Mk 2:18-20		
Mk 2:23-28		
Mk 3:1-6		

What do you see as the key difference between many contemporary 'faith healers' and Jesus' healings in Mark's gospel?

Going Deeper

- 1 **Mk 2:1-12** Faith and healing are often linked. Why do you think that is the case?

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Can Jesus heal where there is no faith?
Who's faith is it here, and who gets healed?

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2 In healing the paralytic, what authority does Jesus claim?

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Were the teachers of the law right, when they accused Jesus of blasphemy?

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Which is easier and why: healing or forgiveness?

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3 **Mk 2:13-17** What do you think the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law have against Levi¹ and his friends?

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4 What do you think Jesus means when he says "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick"? (2:17)

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5 Who are 'the sick' in our community? What is your role in bringing them to 'the doctor'?

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6 **Mk 2:18-22** Jesus and his followers are accused of being 'irreligious' in that they are not fasting. Jesus answers the accusation with three metaphors. How would you explain the first metaphor of the bridegroom?

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Define 'blasphemy' as understood in this passage.

Each of us will have different roles in bringing people to Jesus. Try to give concrete examples as you answer question 5.

¹ Levi is also known as Matthew, the author of Matthew's gospel.

- 7 What do the patch and wine metaphors have in common?

- 8 Drawing the three metaphors together, what is Jesus actually saying to those who accuse him of being 'irreligious'?

- 9 **Mk 2:23-28** (*Optional*) In the face of this accusation, what do you think Jesus means by referring to King David's precedent of breaking the Sabbath laws (cf 1 Sam 21:1-6)?

- 10 What is the Sabbath really all about? (*optional*: see Gen 2:1-3; Ex 23:12; Josh 11:23; Ps 95:10-11; Heb 4:1-11;)

- 11 What, therefore, does it mean for Jesus to be Lord of the Sabbath (v28)?

- 12 Each of the five episodes of conflict we have considered in this study has shown how the Kingdom of God confronts 'religion'—sabbath customs, fasting, keeping away from 'sinners', blasphemy laws etc. Which of our practices, customs and 'religious laws' ought we to re-examine in the light of the presence of God's kingdom?

