

The Gospel of Mark

Controversies

Lesson #3 for July 20, 2024

Scriptures: Mark 2:1-3:6; 3:20-35; Micah 6:6-8; 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Luke 12:53; 14:26.

1. Jesus faced many controversies with the religious authorities. Mark recounts several.

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] Mark 2:1–3:6 contains **five stories that illustrate Jesus’ teaching in contrast to the teaching of the religious leaders.** The stories are in a specific pattern in which **each successive story links to the one before via a topical parallel. The final story circles around and reconnects with the first one.**

Each one of these stories illustrates aspects of who Jesus is, as exemplified by the statements in Mark 2:10, 17, 20, 28. Our studies ... will delve deeper into the meaning of these accounts and Christ’s statements in them.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, July 13.†‡

Mark 2:10,17,20,28: ¹⁰ “I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralysed [*sic*-Br] man,...

¹⁷ Jesus heard them and answered, “People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick. I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.”...

²⁰ “But the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”...

²⁸ “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Mark 2:10,17,20,28). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].†‡

2. These stories are followed by **Mark 3:20-35** which describe Jesus’s family coming to speak with Him because they thought He was losing His mind. At the same time, the Pharisees accused Him of performing miracles with the power of Beelzebul (Satan).

[BSG:] What we will see, too, is an example of a technique the Gospel writer uses that is called “**sandwich stories**” [in which one story is interrupted by another story, and then, there is return to the first story]. This narrative pattern appears at least six times in Mark. In each case some important aspect of the nature of Jesus and His role as Messiah, or the nature of discipleship, is the focus.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, July 13.†‡

3. Read **Mark 2:1-12**. That is the story of the paralyzed man who was let down through the roof of Peter’s house.

[BSG:] The man was paralyzed; his four friends, therefore, had to carry him to Jesus. After they tore through the roof and let the man down into Jesus’ presence, Mark 2:5 notes that **Jesus saw their faith**. How can faith be visible? **Like love, it becomes visible in actions, as the persistence of the friends openly illustrates.**

The man's obvious need was physical. However, when he comes into Jesus' presence, the **first words Jesus pronounces refer to forgiveness of sins.** The man speaks not a word during the entire scene. Instead, it is the religious leaders who object (in their minds) to what Jesus has just said. They consider His words blasphemous, slandering God, and taking on prerogatives that belong only to God.

Jesus meets the objectors on their own ground by **using a typical rabbinic style of argumentation called "lesser to greater."** It is one thing to say that a person's sins are forgiven; it is another thing to actually make a paralyzed man walk. **If Jesus can make the man walk by the power of God, then His claim to forgive sins finds affirmation.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, July 14.^{†‡§}

4. The Jewish leaders believed that any major disease was a result of some sin that that individual or his/her parents had committed. (John 9:1-3) So, in their belief, one's sins must be forgiven in order for his/her sickness/disease to be healed! In this case, the man's problem was apparently caused by some former sins that he had committed. When his friends offered to take him to Jesus to be healed, his greatest concern was about forgiveness of his sins!

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] Yet it was not physical restoration he desired so much as relief from the burden of sin. If he could see Jesus, and receive the assurance of forgiveness and peace with Heaven, he would be content to live or die, according to God's will. The cry of the dying man was, Oh that I might come into His presence! There was no time to lose; already his wasted flesh was showing signs of decay. He besought his friends to carry him on his bed to Jesus, and this they gladly undertook to do. But so dense was the crowd that had assembled in and about the house where the Saviour was, that it was impossible for the sick man and his friends to reach Him, or even to come within hearing of His voice.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 267.4.[‡]

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[EGW:] ... The Saviour looked upon the mournful countenance, and saw the pleading eyes fixed upon Him. **He understood the case; He had drawn to Himself that perplexed and doubting spirit. While the paralytic was yet at home, the Saviour had brought conviction to his conscience.** When he repented of his sins, and believed in the power of Jesus to make him whole, the life-giving mercies of the Saviour had first blessed his longing heart. Jesus had watched the first glimmer of faith grow into a belief that He was the sinner's only helper, and had seen it grow stronger with every effort to come into His presence.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 268.1.^{†‡}

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.1246&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.1246&index=0)[‡]

5. ***How did Jesus know about this case while the man was still at home? What was/were the issue(s) between the religious leaders and Jesus? Does Micah 6:6-8 help us to understand that question and its answer?***

Micah 6:6-8: ⁶ What shall I bring to the LORD, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive

oil? Shall I offer him my firstborn child to pay for my sins? ⁸No, the LORD has told us what is good. **What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

[BSG:] These religious leaders lost sight of what really mattered: justice, mercy, and walking humbly before God. So obsessed with defending their understanding of God, they were blinded to God's working right before their eyes. Nothing indicated that the men changed their minds about Jesus even though **He gave them more than enough evidence to know that He was from God, not only by letting them know that He could read their minds (no simple feat in and of itself) but also by healing the paralytic in their presence in a way that they could not deny.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*^{*} for Sunday, July 14.^{†‡}

6. Read **Mark 2:13-17**. This section relates the story of Jesus calling Levi-Matthew from his work as a tax collector. Later, Jesus ate at a great feast held by Levi at his home. This was completely contrary to the teachings and rigid rules of the Pharisees. A little later, Jesus was accosted by the Pharisees and scribes because His disciples were not fasting as the Pharisees and John's disciples did.

[EGW:] ... **Fasting was practiced by the Jews as an act of merit, and the most rigid among them fasted two days in every week.** The Pharisees and John's disciples were fasting when the latter came to Jesus with the inquiry, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?"—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*^{*} 276.4.^{†‡}

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.1297&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.1297&index=0)[‡]

[EGW:] The true fast is no mere formal service. The Scripture describes the fast that God has chosen,—“to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke;” to “draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul.” Isaiah 58:6, 10. Here is set forth the very spirit and character of the work of Christ. His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew's feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. **Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliation and multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man.**

Continuing His answer to the disciples of John, Jesus spoke a parable, saying, “No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.” **The message of John the Baptist was not to be interwoven with tradition and superstition. An attempt to blend the pretense of the Pharisees with the devotion of John would only make more evident the breach between them....**

While they remained satisfied with a legal religion, it was impossible for them to become the depositaries of the living truth of heaven.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*^{*} 278.2-4.^{†‡}

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7. Ellen White had more to say about the motives behind fasting.

[EGW:] **A legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. Fasting or prayer that is actuated by a self-justifying spirit is an abomination in the sight of God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposing sacrifice, proclaim that the doer of these things regards himself as righteous, and as entitled to heaven; but it is all a deception. Our own works can never purchase salvation.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 280.2.^{†‡}

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8. Tax collectors were despised by most Jews.

[BSG:] Tax collectors in Jesus' day were civil servants under the local or Roman government. They were unpopular among the Jewish population in Judea because they often exacted more than required and became rich off their countrymen. A Jewish commentary on religious law, the *Mishnah* tractate *Tohoroth* says, **"If taxgatherers entered a house [all that is within it] becomes unclean."**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, July 15.^{†‡Ω§}

9. What was the outcome of Jesus's interaction with those tax collectors?

[EGW:] At such gatherings as this, not a few were impressed by the Saviour's teaching who did not acknowledge Him until after His ascension. **When the Holy Spirit was poured out, and three thousand were converted in a day, there were among them many who first heard the truth at the table of the publicans, and some of these became messengers of the gospel.** To Matthew himself the example of Jesus at the feast was a constant lesson. The despised publican became one of the most devoted evangelists, in his own ministry following closely in his Master's steps.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 274.3-275.0.^{†‡}

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10. **Mark 2:18-22** deals with Jesus's answer to the accusations of the scribes and Pharisees about Jesus's disciples not fasting like the scribes and Pharisees and even the disciples of John the Baptist.

11. Jesus tried to suggest that the legalistic religion of the Pharisees could not be mixed with truth. The two were incompatible.

[BSG:] Jesus continues with two illustrations that highlight the contrast between His teaching and that of the religious leaders—unshrunk cloth on an old garment and new wine in old wineskins. What an interesting way to contrast the teaching of Christ and the religious leaders. It shows just how corrupted the ways of the teachers had become. **Even true religion can be turned into darkness if people are not careful.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, July 15.^{†‡}

12. Who today might be looked upon as the tax collectors were in Jesus's day? Would that include drunkards? Drug dealers? Human traffickers? Prostitutes? **How should we adjust our thinking regarding them?**

13. In **Mark 2:23-24** we see Jesus countering the accusations of the Pharisees about the disciples breaking the Sabbath by picking heads of wheat and eating them. According to the laws of the Pharisees, 39 forms of labor were forbidden on the Sabbath. Picking and thrashing and eating heads of wheat broke several of those rules. Jesus responded with a story the accusers knew well from the Old Testament.

[BSG:] Jesus responds with the story of David's eating the sacred shewbread (1 Sam. 21:1-6). The shewbread was removed on the Sabbath; so, David's journey may well have been an emergency escape on the Sabbath. **Jesus argues that if David and his men were justified in eating the shewbread, then Jesus' disciples are justified in plucking and eating grain [on the Sabbath].**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, July 16.†§

14. Read **Mark 3:1-6**. This section relates the story of the man with a "withered" or paralyzed hand that Jesus healed at the synagogue on Sabbath. **They were accusing Him of breaking the Sabbath by making that man with the "withered" hand entirely whole while they were breaking the Sabbath by plotting His murder.**

Mark 3:6: So the Pharisees left the synagogue and met at once with some members of Herod's party, and they made plans to kill Jesus.—*Good News Bible.*†*

15. It is important to notice that **there was no controversy over which day was the Sabbath.**

[BSG:] Jesus proceeds to heal the man, which angers His opponents, who immediately start to plan His demise. **The irony of the story is that those looking to catch Jesus in Sabbath breaking were themselves breaking the Sabbath by plotting His death that same day.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, July 16.†‡

16. The next story we come to is one of the "sandwich" stories. Read **Mark 3:20-35**. It is the story of the family of Jesus beginning to think that He had gone mad because He was not even taking time to eat. They tried to get Him to stop what He was doing. In verses 31-35, Jesus responded by saying that those who followed His teachings were His mother, brothers, and sisters.

17. How many siblings did Jesus have? Were they older or younger than Jesus?

Matthew 13:55-57: [The people of Nazareth said:] ⁵⁵ "Isn't he the carpenter's son? Isn't Mary his mother, and aren't James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters living here? Where did he get all this?" ⁵⁷ **And so they rejected him.**—*Good News Bible.*†‡*

18. Incredible as it may seem, in the early years of His ministry, Jesus was not only in conflict with Pharisees and scribes and the party of Herod, but also, He was in conflict with the members of His own family—His brothers and even His mother!

[EGW:] The enmity kindled in the human heart against the gospel was keenly felt by the Son of God, and it was most painful to Him in His home; for His own

heart was full of kindness and love, and He appreciated tender regard in the family relation. **His brothers desired that He should concede to their ideas, when such a course would have been utterly out of harmony with His divine mission. They looked upon Him as in need of their counsel.** They judged Him from their human point of view, and **thought that if He would speak only such things as would be acceptable to the scribes and Pharisees, He would avoid the disagreeable controversy that His words aroused.** They thought that He was beside Himself in claiming divine authority, and in placing Himself before the rabbis as a reprover of their sins. They knew that the Pharisees were seeking occasion to accuse Him, and they felt that He had given them sufficient occasion....

These things made His path a thorny one to travel. **So pained was Christ by the misapprehension in His own home that it was a relief to Him to go where it did not exist. There was one home that He loved to visit,—the home of Lazarus, and Mary, and Martha; for in the atmosphere of faith and love His spirit had rest.** Yet there were none on earth who could comprehend His divine mission, or know the burden which He bore in behalf of humanity. Often He could find relief only in being alone, and communing with His heavenly Father.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 326.1-4.†‡

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19. How do you suppose that Jesus handled this opposition and controversy not only from the scribes and Pharisees, but even from the members of his own family?
20. By telling a parable, Jesus suggested that He had broken into Satan's house and was releasing Satan's captives from darkness and setting them free.

Mark 3:28-30: ²⁸ [Jesus said:] "I assure you that people can be forgiven all their sins and all the evil things they may say. ²⁹But whoever says evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, because he has committed an eternal sin."
³⁰(Jesus said this because some people were saying, "He has an evil spirit in him.")—*Good News Bible*.*‡

21. The Holy Spirit is the One who makes our bodies work including supporting all the organs, working together and all the metabolic processes which make the organs work. If we refuse to work with Him, we just cut ourselves off from divine help! Jesus's accusers were rejecting the counsel of the Holy Spirit and claiming that Jesus was motivated by the Devil!

[BSG:] The unpardonable sin is the sin against the Holy Spirit, calling the work of the Spirit the work of the devil. Notice that in Mark 3:30 the reason Jesus makes His statement in Mark 3:28, 29 is because the scribes are saying that He has an unclean spirit when in reality He has the Holy Spirit. If you call the work of the Holy Spirit the work of the devil, then you will not listen to the Holy Spirit because no one in his or her right mind wants to follow the devil's guidance.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, July 17.‡

22. **Are there people today who deny the work or even the existence of the Holy Spirit? Many refuse to acknowledge the existence of God Himself. Many also deny the existence of the Devil! What might Jesus say to them?**

23. Why does the fear that you might have committed the “unpardonable sin” reveal that you have not committed it? Why is the fear itself evidence that you have not?
24. ***If one is still concerned about God’s help, it suggests that s/he has not been cut off from God completely.***

[BSG:] **A charge of mental instability is quite serious. Typically, this arises from experiences where a person is a threat to his or her own safety. Jesus’ family felt this way about Him because He was so busy that He did not take time to stop to eat.** They set out to take charge of Him, and that is where the outer story of the sandwich breaks off, interrupted by the inner story about the scribes charging Jesus with collusion with the devil.

A strange parallel exists between the outer and inner stories of this sandwich story. Jesus’ own family seems to have a view of Him parallel to that of the scribes. The family says He is crazy. The scribes say He is in league with the devil.—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, July 18.^{†‡}

25. Those who do the will of God are His brothers, sisters, and “mother.” He is the Son of God, and those who align themselves with the will of God become His “family.”

[BSG:] The two stories of this Markan sandwich story together contain a deep irony. In the inner story, Jesus says that a house divided against itself cannot stand. At first glance, it seems that in the outer story, Jesus’ own house—His family—is divided against itself! But **Jesus resolves this conundrum by His redefinition of family. His real family are those who do the will of God along with Him (see Luke 12:53, Luke 14:26).**

Many times throughout history, Christians have found themselves alienated from their own relatives. It is a difficult experience. This passage in Mark reveals that Jesus went through the same trouble. He understands what it is like and can comfort those who feel this often painful isolation.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, July 18.^{†‡§}

26. With regard to the healing of the man with a withered hand:

[EGW:] When questioned, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days?” Jesus answered, “What man shall there be among *you*, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days.” Matthew 12:10-12.

The spies dared not answer Christ in the presence of the multitude, for fear of involving themselves in difficulty. They knew that He had spoken the truth. Rather than violate their traditions, they would leave a man to suffer, while they would relieve a brute because of the loss to the owner if it were neglected. **Thus greater care was shown for a dumb animal than for man, who is made in the image of God. This illustrates the working of all false religions. They originate in man’s desire to exalt himself above God, but they result in degrading man below the brute.** Every religion that wars against the sovereignty of God defrauds man of the glory which was his at the creation, and which is to be restored to him in Christ. Every false religion

teaches its adherents to be careless of human needs, sufferings, and rights. The gospel places a high value upon humanity as the purchase of the blood of Christ, and it teaches a tender regard for the wants and woes of man. The Lord says, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." Isaiah 13:12.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 286.3-287.0.†‡§

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27. **Are there any issues that cause us to be blinded? To be motivated by hatred? Tradition? Dogma? Or, religious teachings in general?**
28. **One of the important aspects of this section of Mark is to notice that Jesus had a large crowd following Him almost everywhere He went. He did not confine His work to the synagogues.**

[BSG:] In short, this segment of Mark's account highlights that Jesus ministered to people in houses in the city, in the synagogue, and even in rural areas. In this way, we see that Jesus' served the people. His ministry was both urban and rural in His region.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 39-40.‡

29. What this means is that so many people were following Jesus—including Pharisees, scribes, and spies—that He was constantly ministering. There was not enough room for the crowds to get inside any building! **Jesus ministered to people wherever He found them.**
30. In this section we have seen a marked opposition by Pharisees, scribes, and even Herodians. However, it is important to notice that the Sadducees were not mentioned. That is because the work of the Sadducees was confined almost exclusively to the temple in Jerusalem, and Jesus was not there.

[BSG:] The challenge Jesus faces now is not against the forces of darkness. The demons have no active role and no real power against Him in this section of the narrative beyond what is mentioned in Mark 3:11, wherein, the author asserts, the demons fell down prostrate before Jesus. **The conflict that Jesus is facing here is against something more concrete: the spiritual leaders or teachers of the nation.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40.†‡

31. **Notice that Jesus could get the demons to recognize who He was; but, He could not get the Jewish leaders to do so!**

[BSG:] Scholars have attested that Pharisees and scribes were associated with leading positions in Jewish society, from approximately 200 BCE to 100 CE. These two groups were the literate and learned leaders of the nation, living in diverse regions of the country. (See Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001], pp. 4, 40, 52.) In some sense, the scribes and Pharisees represented the scholarly sector of their time.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40.†‡§

32. The Hasid were very strict legalists who were known for going beyond the requirements of the law, often for show—to be seen by and admired by other people.

[BSG quoting Lee-Barnewall:] Michelle Lee-Barnewall points out, “The Pharisees may have arisen from the Hasideans, with their ties to the scribes, as the ones who emphasized the study of the law and obedience to the commandments.”—Lee-Barnewall, “Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes,” in *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, eds. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), p. 218.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40.†§

33. Flavius Josephus was a Jew who often sided with the Romans. However, he was one of the few individuals who wrote extensively about Jewish-Roman relationships.

[BSG:] Flavius Josephus describes the influence of these scholarly groups and the pressure they exerted in their society in relation to *the traditions* surrounding the Torah. “The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers which are not written in the law of Moses; and for that reason, the Sadducees reject them and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers.”—*The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), p. 355.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40].†§

34. To the Pharisees, their traditions were often considered more important than the Scriptures themselves! (See Mark 7.) Jesus clearly disagreed. By challenging their interpretations, He also was challenging their social standing.

[BSG:] The Mishnah also reveals certain tensions that existed in relation to the teaching of the scribes. For instance, Sanhedrin 11:3 implies that teachers put more emphasis on the traditions instead of the Torah. “There is greater stringency with regard to traditional rabbinic interpretations of the Torah than with regard to matters of the Torah” (*Sanhedrin 11:3*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 40-41.†§

35. The Pharisees, being very well educated in the Old Testament, introduced their interpretations of the Scriptures as being more important than the Scriptures themselves.

[BSG quoting Saldarini:] “The Pharisees’ knowledge of Jewish law and traditions, accepted by the people, [was] the basis of their social standing. Presumably, the scribes and priests also had influence with some of the people. . . . Jesus’ struggle with the Pharisees, scribes and chief priests can be explained most easily as a struggle for influence with the people.”—Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: Eerdmans/Dove, 2001), p. 33.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 41].†Ω§ [Compare Matthew 23.]‡

36. **In this section of Mark, Jesus clearly demonstrated that faith is shown by action.** He told the young, paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven; then, Jesus healed him and ordered him to walk out of the house.

37. The major controversy in this section, of course, was over whether or not Jesus had the authority to do things that were considered to be strictly the domain of God.

[BSG quoting Stein:] “In a context in which God alone was seen as being able to forgive sins (Mark 2:7; cf. Luke 7:49), Jesus does so. . . . Jesus is accused

of blasphemy not because he is directly claiming to be God or pronouncing the sacred name of God but because he acts like God.”—Robert H. Stein, *Mark, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [sic]* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 119.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 41-42.]^{†§}

38. In summary, the question being raised by the religious leaders was: Could Jesus be the divine Messiah?

[BSG:] Jesus points out clearly that He, as the Son of Man, the Divine One on earth, has authority to forgive sins (*Mark 2:10*). The author of the Gospel stresses an important detail: people, unlike the scribes, recognized that the restoration of the paralytic—including the forgiveness of his sin—was a divine act. “They were all amazed and were glorifying God” (*Mark 2:12, NASB*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 42.^{†§}

39. Imagine the frustration of the scribes and Pharisees as they tried to condemn Jesus. Every time they tried to pin some problem on Him, He turned it back on them.

[BSG:] **Unfortunately, the scribes do not recognize Jesus’ work as divine in origin.** Instead, they ascribe His works to the power of demons. Because of this malicious and wrongful accusation, Jesus defends His actions as the outworking of the Holy Spirit. Further, Jesus charges the scribes of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Their misconception of the work of Jesus has rendered them “guilty of an eternal sin” (*Mark 3:29, NASB*), “i.e., one with infinite consequences. . . . The unforgivable sin is the stubborn refusal to acknowledge that God is working/has worked in the man Jesus.” Unfortunately, according to Brooks, their stubborn refusal “is not a single act but a habitual action and attitude. The imperfect tense [of *hoti elegon*, 3:30] could be translated, ‘They kept on saying.’” —James A. Brooks, *Mark, The New American Commentary*, vol. 23, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), p. 76.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 42].^{†‡Ω§}

40. How would we have related to Jesus if we had been there?

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