

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XXXVI. Christ's Proof Of Forgiving Sin As God
(Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26)

I. Introduction

- A. A major critique of the Christian faith is the claim that Jesus Himself never referred to Himself as God, only as a man, that it was an errant effort by the apostles and especially the Apostle Paul who followed Jesus who misled the Christian community into believing that Jesus was not only Messiah, but also God.
- B. An event that followed Christ's healing of the leper is very revealing as to the view Christ had of His deity, and we study it in Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26 for our insight, application and edification:

II. Christ's Proof Of Forgiving Sin As God, Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26.

- A. News of Jesus' healing of the leper had apparently made its way to the Jerusalem priests as a testimony to them in accord with Jesus' words to the healed man in Mark 1:44. That news had likely motivated the religious leaders throughout Israel to travel to Galilee to evaluate Jesus to determine if He was the Messiah sent from God (Luke 5:17; J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 151-152).
- B. Meanwhile, Christ had returned to Capernaum from ministering throughout Galilee, and news of His return had caused multitudes of people to gather to hear Him as He taught in a house, Mark 2:1-2.
- C. In this setting, four friends of a paralytic carried the stricken man to the house on his bed to get Jesus to heal him, but they were blocked by a great crowd of people who had gathered to hear Jesus teach, Mark 2:3-4a.
- D. The four men then carried the paralytic up the outside staircase that led to the roof and removed the thin stone slabs that lay over the framing so they could lower the man down to Jesus, Luke 5:19; Mark 2:4; *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- E. When Jesus saw this exhibition of faith by the stricken man and his four friends, instead of immediately healing the man, Christ made a statement to him that caught everyone – including the examining religious leaders present – by surprise: He told the paralytic, “Man, your sins have been forgiven you,” Luke 5:20.
- F. The scribal experts of the Law and the theologically conservative Pharisees began to question in themselves, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Luke 5:21) This questioning was certainly reasonable, for “rabbinical theology taught that all physical infirmity was a sign of divine displeasure and came as a punishment from God for specific sin. Since God was the One displeased with sin, and the One who, according to the Rabbis, had punished this paralytic because of sin, only God could forgive sin. Christ was, then, claiming the prerogatives that belong to God,” *Ibid.*, p. 153. Furthermore, “(o)ne who usurped the prerogatives of Deity, according to Levitical law, was to be punished by death,” *Ibid.*
- G. Jesus immediately understood these thoughts by Israel's learned leaders, so He asked them what they were reasoning in their hearts regarding His claim to have forgiven the paralytic's sins, Luke 5:22.
- H. Christ then asked the religious leaders what was easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven you” or “Rise up and walk,” the answer being “Rise up and walk”: one could not prove that he had forgiven another by simply stating that claim, but, in this case, the order to rise up and walk required a miracle, Luke 5:23; *Ibid.*
- I. Jesus then said that for the religious leaders to know the “Son of man” had authority **on the earth** to forgive sins (as God Incarnate), Jesus told the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go into your house,” Luke 5:24.
- J. “At once, immediately” (*parachrema*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 629) the man rose up before them, picked up his bed, and departed to his house, glorifying God for his healing, Luke 5:25. Christ's miracle not only involved instantly healing the man of his paralysis, but it also involved his withered body instantly becoming equipped with the strength and coordination without extensive physical therapy to cause the man to rise up, stand up, pick up his bed and carry it all the way back to his house!
- K. This miracle that backed up Christ's claim to deity also fulfilled Isaiah 35:4-6a that identified Him as God!
- L. All of those present were amazed, they glorified God, and they were filled with fear, saying that they had seen “remarkable, contrary to expectation” (*paradoxos*, *Ibid.*, p. 621) things that day, Luke 5:26.

Lesson: *Jesus proved to the religious leaders from all over Israel that He was God Incarnate, able to forgive sins on the earth in His earthly life, doing so by performing the instant, complete healing and physical restoration of a paralytic. This miracle fulfilled Bible prophecy to prove that Jesus was God Incarnate. (cf. also Matthew 11:2-6)*

Application: *(1) May we believe Jesus' claim to be God Incarnate that was proved before Israel's religious leaders by his Biblical miracle of healing the paralytic that attested to that claim. (2) May we answer those who deny that Jesus Christ held Himself to be God Incarnate by referring them to this event.*