

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL STORIES AND SIGNS

## JESUS THE MIRACLE WORKER

### *The Greater Miracle of Forgiveness*

#### *Matthew 9:2-8, Mark 2:1-2, Luke 5:18-26*

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, there was a ‘magnetic’ attraction to Him in part because PEOPLE WERE BEING HEALED. Who wouldn’t want to see that? Who wouldn’t want to experience the miracle of physical healing? However, there is an even greater miracle than physical healing. It is God’s miracle of forgiveness of our sin in the midst of His own holiness.

The need for forgiveness of sin began early in man’s history when Adam and Eve willingly disobeyed God. They chose to turn from fellowship with their Creator by doing what they wanted to do instead of heeding the LORD’s command. As the result sin came into the world, and every generation has inherited their sin nature. Along with sin, came guilt, separation and loss of fellowship from God and death. But, God so loved the people He had created, it was not His desire that any should perish under the curse of sin. So, He created a plan where humans can avoid spiritual death and eternal separation from Him by choosing life everlasting. In order for God to provide such a plan to forgive sin, two conditions must be met. First, a blood sacrifice had to be made to cover sin. **Hebrews 9:22 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> ... *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.* Jesus’ ministry ended with His being the Lamb of God whose life’s blood would take away the sin of the world. God met the first condition with the sacrifice of Jesus’ sinless life. We must meet the second condition by accepting Jesus’ sacrifice through our own repentance from sin and by faith accepting His saving grace. **Acts 3:19 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> *Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.*

Yes, Jesus’ power to forgive sins is the greatest miracle of love and grace known to man. **Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,* <sup>9</sup> *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

When Jesus healed a physically paralyzed man, He made a divine connection concerning His power to heal those spiritually paralyzed by sin. Matthew, Mark and Luke all report the miracle we will study today. We will use Mark’s account of this miracle.

Prior to the ‘Open Roof Miracle’, Jesus had healed a leper. Jesus told the man not to share his miraculous healing. Instead of being obedient to the Lord’s Word, the man proceeded to tell of his healing which caused Jesus to be bombarded with crowds. Luke’s account reveals that in order to continue His private time alone with the Father, Jesus withdrew to the wilderness to pray. Through those prayer times, Jesus received power from God. **Luke 5:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the*

*Lord was with him to heal.* David Legge says, “When Christ was there, wherever He was - in the wilderness, in the home, on the street - there was power, the power of God to heal lives.” That power of God is still present for those today who possess His Holy Spirit! **Acts 1:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, ...*

The Power of God’s Spirit will bring boldness. In today’s passage we find four bold men. Their faith is portrayed as desperately seeking restoration from Jesus.

**Read Mark 2:1-4 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.* <sup>2</sup> *And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.* <sup>3</sup> *And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.* <sup>4</sup> *And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.*

Before we look at the actual miracle. Let’s consider where the miracle occurred since it is significant. Capernaum was the ‘ministry headquarters’ of Jesus. We might wonder ‘why Capernaum?’ Like everything connected to Jesus, there is always a reason even though we might need to look closely to see that reason.

After the reign of King Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms – the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. During the time of Jesus, Israel was no longer divided but they were under Roman rule. The Messiah was promised to be born in Bethlehem of Judea but did those location prophecies stop there? No. Let’s read a prophecy from Isaiah.

**Read Isaiah 9:1-2 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.* <sup>2</sup> *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

Although born in Bethlehem as prophesied, Jesus grew up in Nazareth which was located in Zebulun. This portion of Israel was given to the descendents of Zebulun, a son of Jacob’s wife Leah. Jesus made His ministry headquarters in Capernaum which was in Naphtali. This was the land given to the descendents of Naphtali, Jacob’s son who was born to Bilhah, the servant of Jacob’s wife Rachel. The geographical areas were especially devastated when the Assyrian army moved in, but these areas would be especially honored by the ministry of the Messiah.

**Matthew 4:13-16** confirmed that Jesus lived in Capernaum for the purpose of fulfilling this prophesy of Isaiah. Sadly, even though Jesus centered His ministry in Capernaum, the people of that city did not accept Him as Savior. They were looking strictly at the physical side of following Jesus.

According to the Hobbs Commentary, some Bible students believe that Jesus owned a house in Capernaum. **Mark 1:29** specifically mentions that Peter and his brother Andrew did have a house in Capernaum. Perhaps

Jesus stayed with them and considered their home His own for a time. I tend to doubt that Jesus possessed His own personal home because of His words in **Luke 9:58 (ESV)**<sup>58</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."* Whoever the owner of the house was, they ended up with a leaky roof for sure.

Hospitality was one of the basic laws of the East. As we see from this passage, the people of Capernaum did not wait for an invitation but simply came to the house in droves. This created a problem because some of the truly needy people could not get close enough to Jesus to receive His help. We should be careful in our own lives that we do not 'get in the way' of others coming to Christ. Four enterprising men believed that for every problem there is a solution. **James 1:22 (ESV)**<sup>22</sup> *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

Since the door to Jesus was blocked by the crowd, they carried their paralyzed friend up onto the flat roof, normally reached by an outside stairway – possibly similar to a modern-day fire escape. We are not told how the man became paralyzed. Some suggest he had been injured doing something that caused the men to feel responsible. A better suggestion might be they just loved him so much their heart's desire was to see him healed.

They lifted off the roof tiles and cleared out the thatch from a large enough area on the roof to ease the paralyzed man down through the opening to Jesus. Were these men physically strong men themselves since they carried their friend up the roof and then lowered a bed with the man lying on the bed downward in front of Jesus? Again, a better suggestion might be that they were of average or below average strength but they were operating in the power of the Spirit of God just like we can when we work to bring others to Jesus. It was their faith that mattered to Jesus! Forgiveness is assumed to be a greater need than healing.

**Read Mark 2:5 (ESV)**<sup>5</sup> *And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*

In this verse we see that the faith of these four men was made evident by their works. They had faith that Jesus stood ready to meet their friend's need. Theirs was a faith that glorified God. J. Vernon McGee comments, "What we need in the church today is stretcher-bearers -- men and women with that kind of faith to go out and bring in the unsaved so they can hear the gospel. There are many people today who are paralyzed with sin, indifference, or prejudice. A great many people are not going to come into church where the gospel is preached unless you take a corner of the stretcher and bring them in. That's what these men did. They had the faith to bring this poor man to hear the Lord Jesus deal with him personally and say, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"

At another time, Jesus explained that not all sickness is caused by sin in response to a question about a man who had been born blind.

**Read John 9:1-3 (ESV)**<sup>1</sup> *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.*<sup>2</sup> *And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*<sup>3</sup> *Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."*

There are human actions that can harm our bodies. Whether this was the situation with this man, we are not told; however, like all of us he was a sinner who needed the healing of forgiveness. Jesus, our sinless sacrifice, spoke these words to connect His power to forgive sins to His power to physically heal. **Psalm 103:2-3 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,* <sup>3</sup> *who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.* Jesus relieves both temporal and eternal suffering.

**Read Mark 2:6-12 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,* <sup>7</sup> *“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”* <sup>8</sup> *And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts?”* <sup>9</sup> *Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’* <sup>10</sup> *But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—* <sup>11</sup> *“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.”* <sup>12</sup> *And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”*

Some would like to believe that Jesus read their facial expressions and body language. However, the scripture says that Jesus perceived in His spirit that they were questioning what He said. **Psalm 139:2 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.* Jesus’ ability to ‘read hearts’ is yet, another affirmation that Jesus is God! He knows our thoughts and even as He reads our thoughts He is still willing to forgive us! Hallelujah what a Savior!

A legalist depends on moral law and not faith. These scribes were ‘legalists’ who wanted nothing to do with God’s grace. They did not go to God’s Word for answers concerning Jesus; instead they chose to debate among themselves. They questioned, ‘*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*’ all the while missing God in the Flesh standing in their midst. Please don’t miss connecting with Jesus as His Presence whispers to your own heart.

Since they were so fond of questioning everything Jesus said and did, Jesus gave them a question. *Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’* Jesus did not even bother to wait for their answer because He already knew they did not have an answer.

Jesus took this opportunity to reveal His authority and power to forgive sins and physically heal the man as well. He turned to the helpless paralytic and commanded him to rise up and carry his bed and return home healed. There was power in His Word. As He spoke, strength came to those legs and the man got up to the astonishment of all who were looking on. When we are healed of our sin, we too like the paralyzed man can get up and go ‘home’ – home to heaven!

The modern day song says, ‘There is power in the name of Jesus – to break every chain – to break every chain – all sufficient sacrifice – so freely given – such a price. Do you believe that? Or, are you like the scribes of Jesus’ day looking to question and argue with the Son of Man who is the Son of God at every twist and turn in your life? Don’t argue! Just have faith and believe His Word!