

Lesson 8

JESUS FORGIVING SINS

We don't know how many people were healed by Jesus. Likewise, we don't know how many people had their sins forgiven by Him. We can only write about those recorded in the New Testament. I was surprised to find there were only two cases where Jesus spoke directly to persons and said these words, "Your sins are forgiven." There are at least two other cases where His forgiving of sins is strongly inferred. We will begin by looking at the first two.

The forgiving and healing of a paralytic was related by Matthew (9:1-8), Mark (2:1-12), and Luke (5:17-26). Mark's writing will be used in this lesson.

"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, '**Son, your sins are forgiven.**'

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷'Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?' ¹⁰**But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.**" So he said to the man, ¹¹"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."
¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Jesus knew he would be challenged so He forgave first and kept the display of his power until last.

Luke alone records the second time Jesus tells someone, "Your sins are forgiven." Luke 7:36-50. Verses 36 through 39 start the story. ³⁶When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.'"

Some scholars think that this story is the same anointing that was done at Bethany. There are many differences. Jesus alone was invited. There were other guests, but they did not know who Jesus was. There are many who think that this woman was Mary Magdalene, (Mary of Magdala. Magdala is a small village on the west side of the Sea of Galilee). They may be right. The apostle John identified the woman who performed the anointing at Bethany as “**This Mary**, whose brother Lazarus . . .” John 11:2a. **This Mary** could well imply that it was another Mary who did the other anointing. There are many reasons that show, the two are not the same.

In response to the Pharisee’s thoughts, Jesus tells him a parable about someone forgiven a lot and someone forgiven a little. Then he asks who would love him more. The Pharisee indicated, the one forgiven a lot.

⁴⁴ Then He turned toward the woman and said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.’

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, ‘**Your sins are forgiven.**’”

Why did the woman love so much? If it were Mary Magdalene, Jesus has cast out seven demons and given her back a normal life.

The first implied forgiveness involves Zacchaeus and is recorded in Luke 19:1-10. Once, when Jesus was passing through Jericho, a man named Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. He was the chief tax collector and was very rich. His problem was he was short. So he ran ahead and climbed a tree.

⁴⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and **if** I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’ [Some people think Zacchaeus has been cheating but the **if** indicates he did not think so.]

⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’”

Salvation has come to this house, gives us a strong **indication** that his sins were forgiven.

The second implied forgiveness is to the thief on the cross. Luke 23:39-43. Jesus had been crucified between two thieves. The following is what Luke records.

“One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’

⁴² Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’

⁴³ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”

This would have been the last recording of Jesus forgiving sins before he died.

My wife died two years ago. When she was living she could give away any of her things or money to anyone she wanted to, and often did. When she died she left a will with a lot of instructions. To the best of our ability, the family followed her instructions. We did so because of our love for her and respect for her wishes. Actually, to have done otherwise would have been illegal.

I filled out a lot of paperwork after her death. I had to learn the meaning of some words not familiar to me. The main words were **testate** and **intestate**. I had to check or circle one of them in several documents. Below are some definitions we need to understand.

TESTATE: Having made a legally binding Will before death.

INTESTATE: Not having a legally binding Will before death.

WILL: A legal declaration of how a person wishes his/her possessions to be disposed of after his/her death.

TESTAMENT: a. A written document providing for the disposition of one’s property after death. b. A Will, last Will and Testament. c. A Covenant between man and God.

COVENANT: A binding agreement or contract.

The Greek word *diatheke* is translated, in the New Testament, as “Covenant,” or “Testament” or “Will.” When you look at the definitions above it makes sense.

We have looked at Jesus forgiving sins either directly stated or strongly implied, while he was alive. Now let us look at how He planned to give initial forgiveness after his death. Jesus did leave a new Covenant/Will/Testament. That is why He came into the world. The new covenant created a spiritual kingdom. Jesus became both its king and priest just as Melchizedek was both king and priest of Salem. Was it possible for Jesus to be a priest since Jesus was not a descendant of Aaron? The Hebrew writer says it is not possible unless there is a change of the law/covenant. Hebrews 7:12. But there was a change. When Jesus died his will/testament came into effect. The covenant, called the Law of Moses, is no longer God’s covenant with mankind.

The Hebrew writer also wrote, **“Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.”** And, **“In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”** Hebrews 8:6-7 and 13.

Seldom is a will/testament read the day of the testator’s death and Jesus’ was not.

When a large estate is involved, usually an attorney is used to see that all the details of the will are properly executed. Jesus told the apostles, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.** A large estate is involved.

Luke tells us that Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem until they received the promise. On the day of Pentecost when thousands had gathered in Jerusalem from many countries; Peter was given the privilege of presenting the opening of the will. Standing with the Eleven, he gave a long discourse. To remove the idea that they were drunk he quoted Joel 2:28-32 which ends with the statement “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” A lot of people are told that, “This is it. That is all you need to do.”

But Peter didn’t stop there. Peter pointed out how Jesus had been accreted by God. He told them that they had turned Jesus over to be crucified by wicked men. God had raised Him from the dead and He sits at the right hand of God, and much more. Finally, he says “Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said o Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied: **‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.** And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’” Acts 2:36-39.

Peter never changed his charge. When the Holy Spirit sent him to open the Kingdom to the Gentiles, starting with Cornelius, Peter ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Peter was not the only one. All of the conversions recorded in the New Testament included baptism.

There is a lot more in the New Covenant about pleasing Jesus and continuing our way to his home in Heaven, but this lesson was limited to the initial forgiving of sins and becoming a member of Jesus’ family. Those of us who are Christians need forgiveness of sins. And that forgiveness comes with a lot of repentance and prayer.