

Mark 2:13-28

Mark begins a series of five conflicts that Jesus has with religious leaders:

1. Forgiving and healing the paralyzed man(2:1-12)
2. Eating with tax collectors and sinners (2:13-17)
3. Not fasting like John's disciples and the Pharisees (2:18-22)
4. Picking Grain on the Sabbath (2:23-28)
5. Healing on the Sabbath (3:1-6)

Levi:

Mark 2:13-17 –

13 He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them.

14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

15 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

1. 2:13 – "He was teaching them" may mean "he began to teach them" since it is inceptive imperfect. Meaning anytime a crowd started to form around Jesus his first response was to start explaining things to them and teaching them what they needed to understand about his mission and the plan of God.
2. 2:14 – "son of Alphaeus"
 - a. This is Matthew of Matthew 9:9 and 10:3
 - b. It is likely that Matthew Levi was a Levite since most people in the Israel at this time named Levi were Levites.
 - c. If this is the case the Levite became a tax collector.
 - d. There is a disciple named "James son of Alphaeus" in Mark 18. Potentially this could be Matthew's (Levi's) brother.
3. Levi was at a tax booth or a tollbooth where customs were collected on items being transported into Herod Antipas's territory which was Galilee.
 - a. Capernaum was the first major city travelers would have entered coming from the northeast territory of Herod Philip
 - b. It was very likely Levi would have also collected taxes for Rome on fish caught and transported from the Sea of Galilee.
 - c. Tax collectors were not paid by Rome, but instead charged the people they taxed for their services of collecting the taxes. This could be a very flexible and subjective amount.
 - d. Some Jewish rules from the Mishnah concerning tax collectors:
 - i. Donations could not be accepted from a tax collector since they were considered illegal
 - ii. Everything in a house became unclean if a tax collector entered
 - iii. Rabbis taught it was permissible to lie to a tax collector

4. “Follow me” – indicates a progression and is similar to the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John. All four of these men had previous encounters and conversations with Jesus. It is not out of the question to assume Jesus and Levi had previously interacted and this was Jesus calling Levi to become a student/disciple of his. Either way Jesus chose a disciple from the tax collectors, and possibly a lost member of the Levitical tribe whose responsibility included teaching the Word and Law of God.
5. 2:15 – Reclining at a dinner party indicates a formal banquet or fashionable dinner party where guests were reclining of cushions around a low table eating and talking.
 - a. This banquet was at Levi’s nice residence in Capernaum
 - b. Levi intended to honor Jesus and introduce his friends to Jesus.
 - c. “sinners” simply means “sinful” and is used to identify people who are “sinning, sinful, depraved, detestable” in the eyes of the person describing these common people.
 - i. These were “sinners” in the eyes of the Pharisees.
 - ii. Since these were not associated with Jesus’ other disciples they may have been sold out to Rome and the worldly system and had forsaken Jewish life.
 - iii. Yet, these were wealthy, successful people associated with Levi.
 - d. This is the first use of the word “disciples” by Mark
 - e. Note: “there were many and they were following him” referring to either “disciples” or “tax collectors and sinners”. Maybe even, “sinners” who had become “disciples”:

2532 [e]	1096 [e]	2621 [e]	846 [e]	1722 [e]	3588 [e]	3614 [e]	846 [e]	2532 [e]	4183 [e]	5057 [e]	2532 [e]
Kai	ginetai	katakeisthai	auton	en	tē	oikia	autou	kai	polloi	telōnai	kai
15 Καὶ	γίνεται ,	κατακεῖσθαι	αὐτὸν	ἐν	τῇ	οἰκίᾳ	αὐτοῦ ,	καὶ	πολλοὶ	τελῶναι	καὶ
And	it came to pass	reclining	of Him	in	the	house	of him	that	many	tax collectors	and
Conj	V-PIM/P-3S	V-PNM/P	PPro-AM3S	Prep	Art-DFS	N-DFS	PPro-GM3S	Conj	Adj-NMP	N-NMP	Conj

268 [e]	4873 [e]	3588 [e]	2424 [e]	2532 [e]	3588 [e]	3101 [e]	846 [e]	1510 [e]	1063 [e]	4183 [e]	2532 [e]
hamartōloi	synanekeinto	tō	Iēsou	kai	tois	mathētais	autou	ēsan	gar	polloi	kai
ἁμαρτωλοὶ	συνανέκειντο	τῷ	Ἰησοῦ	καὶ	τοῖς	μαθηταῖς	αὐτοῦ ;	ἦσαν	γὰρ	πολλοὶ ,	καὶ
sinners	were reclining with	-	Jesus	and	the	disciples	of Him	there were	for	many	and
Adj-NMP	V-IIM/P-3P	Art-DMS	N-DMS	Conj	Art-DMP	N-DMP	PPro-GM3S	V-IIA-3P	Conj	Adj-NMP	Conj

190 [e]	846 [e]
ēkolouthoun	autō
ἠκολούθουν	αὐτῷ .
they were following	Him
V-IIA-3P	PPro-DM3S

6. 2:16 – the Scribes were experts in the Law of God and members of the Pharisees. This is Mark’s first reference to Pharisees (originally they were the separatists that formed from the conservative movement started by the Maccabees revolt against the Selucids and Antiochus IV Epiphanes between 175-163. They became the Hasmoneans.
 - a. Jesus ate and conversed with the Pharisees on several occasions.
 - b. Jesus’ criticism of the Pharisees was mainly their hypocrisy and their man made traditions that were exalted to being equal with the Word of God.
7. 2:17 – Jesus who was at first Levi’s guest ends up being the host inviting the “sinners” to his banquet.



Fasting:

Mark 2:18-22 –

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, “Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?”

19 And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.

22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.”

Sabbath:

Mark 2:23-28 –

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

25 And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him:

26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?”

27 And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”