

Mark 2:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

Analysis

The scribes' reasoning is theologically correct: 'Who can forgive sins but God only?' (Greek *ei mē heis ho theos*). Forgiveness of sins belongs exclusively to God because sin offends His holiness primarily. Human forgiveness addresses interpersonal wrongs, but ultimate guilt before God requires divine pardon. The scribes accurately identify Jesus' implicit deity claim when He pronounces forgiveness (2:5). Their logic was sound: either Jesus blasphemes by usurping divine prerogative, or He is God incarnate. Jesus' subsequent healing (2:10-12) proves His authority, vindicating the deity claim. This confronts modern readers with the same choice: Jesus is either blasphemer or Lord. CS Lewis's famous trilemma applies—Jesus cannot be merely a good teacher while claiming divine authority. Reformed theology affirms Christ's full deity as essential for atonement: only God can forgive, and only man can die; thus God-man redeems.

Historical Context

Scribes were professional Torah scholars, experts in Jewish law and tradition. Their charge of blasphemy was capital—punishable by stoning (Leviticus 24:16). In Jewish theology, God alone forgives because sin violates His law and offends His holiness. Even priests offering sacrifices didn't forgive but mediated God's forgiveness. The scribes' internal reasoning ('in their hearts,' 2:6) suggests they didn't voice the accusation publicly yet, but Jesus' knowledge of their thoughts demonstrated supernatural insight. This scene occurred in Capernaum, Jesus' ministry base, before a crowd so large people couldn't enter the house (2:2). The

public setting meant Jesus' claim couldn't be ignored—He forced a decision about His identity.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Do you truly grasp that your sin primarily offends God, making His forgiveness essential?
2. How does Jesus' authority to forgive sins give you confidence in complete reconciliation with God?

Interlinear Text

τίς	οὗτος	οὕτως	λαλεῖ	βλασφημίας	τίς	δύναται
Why	this	man thus	doth	blasphemies	Why	can
G5101	G3778	G3779	G2980	G988	G5101	G1410

ἀφιέναι	ἁμαρτίας	εἰ	μὴ	εἷς	ὁ	θεός
forgive	sins			only		God
G863	G266	G1487	G3361	G1520	G3588	G2316

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 43:25 (Sin): I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Daniel 9:9 (References God): To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

Micah 7:18 (Sin): Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Luke 5:21 (Sin): And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

Psalms 130:4 (Parallel theme): But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

Job 14:4 (Parallel theme): Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

Luke 7:49 (Sin): And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

Mark 14:64 (Parallel theme): Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

Matthew 9:3 (Parallel theme): And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.

Matthew 26:65 (Parallel theme): Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.