

Mark 3

This chapter details another controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees related to healing on the Sabbath (3:1-6), which begins the antagonism which will lead to Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus withdraws while He continues to teach and heal (3:7-12). The twelve apostles are chosen from among His disciples (3:13-19). When Jesus expels yet another demon (3:20-22) He discusses the "unforgivable sin" (3:23-30). The chapter ends with Jesus pointing out that following Him is more important than a physical relationship with Him (3:31-35).

TRANSLATION - 3:1-6:

1 And He entered again into the synagogue. And there was there a man having the hand, having been atrophied. **2** And they watched Him closely if on the Sabbath He will heal him, in order they might accuse Him. **3** And He says¹ to the man, having the atrophied hand, "Arise into the middle." **4** And He says to them, "Is it authorized on the Sabbath good to do or to do evil? A soul to save or to destroy?" And they were silent. **5** And after looking around at them with anger, grieving at the hardness of their hearts, He says to the man, "Extend the hand." And he extended [it] and the hand was restored. **6** And after going out, the Pharisees immediately with the Herodians gave counsel against Him how Him they might destroy.

GREEK WORDS:

"Synagogue" (ver. 1) was seen earlier at 1:21, 23, 29, 39. The verb "to dry or wither" denotes, in this context, muscles which are atrophied. The verb is used 15 times in the NT; Mark uses it six times: 3:1; 4:6; 5:29; 9:18; 11:20-21. "Hand" is used 177 times in the NT, 26 times in Mark. "To watch closely" (ver. 2) is used only here in Mark, out of six uses. "Sabbath" was seen earlier at 1:21. "To heal" was seen earlier at 1:34. "To accuse" or "to bring charges" is used 23 times in the NT. Mark uses the verb at 3:2; 15:3-4. "Atrophied" (ver. 3) is the adjectival form of the verb used in verse 1. This adjective is used eight times in the NT, only here in Mark. "To arise" is often used to refer to Jesus' resurrection. The verb was used earlier at 1:31; 2:9, 11-12. "To be authorized" (ver. 4) is used 31 times in the NT; it was used in Mark at 2:24, 26. "Good" is used 102 times in the NT. Mark uses the adjective four times: 3:4; 10:17-18. "To do evil" is all one verb in Greek; it is used at Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; 1 Peter 3:17; 3 John 11. "Soul" is used 103 times in the NT; Mark uses it eight times: 3:4; 8:35-37; 10:45; 12:30; 14:34. "To save" is used 106 times in the NT. In a soteriological context, it refers to salvation from sins. Otherwise, it refers to physical healing. Mark uses the verb 15 times (this is his first use). "To kill" is used 74 times in the NT, 11 times in Mark. "To be silent" is used ten times, in Mark at: 3:4; 4:39; 9:34; 10:48; 14:61.

"To look around" (ver. 5) is used seven times, all but one in Mark: 3:5, 34; 5:32; 9:8; 10:23; 11:11; Luke 6:10. "Anger" is used 36 times; this is its first and only use in Mark. "To grieve" is used only here in the NT. "Hardness" or "dullness" is used three times: Mark 3:5; Romans 11:25; Eph. 4:18. "Heart" is used 156 times, earlier in Mark at 2:6, 8. "To extend" is used 16 times, first in Mark at 1:41. "To be restored" is used eight times, in Mark three times: 3:5; 8:25; 9:12. "Counsel" (ver. 6) is used eight times, only in Mark at 3:6 and 15:1. "To destroy" in this context denotes "to kill." It is used 90 times, earlier in Mark at 1:24 and 2:22.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

For more on the Pharisees (ver. 6), see comments at 2:16, 18.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

¹ This verb is one of the 150+ historical presents Mark uses (a present tense verb used although the past is indicated) to bring vividness to his account.

Verse 4 might be an allusion to Deuteronomy 30:15. Compare the Pharisees' response in verse 5 with Israel in the days of the prophets: Jer. 3:17; 7:24; 9:13; 11:18; 13:10; 16:12; Psalm 81:13; Deut. 29:18.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

Those in the synagogue would stand around the walls or sit / kneel on mats on the floor. The "Herodians" (ver. 6) are mentioned only in the Bible, in Matthew 22:16; Mark 3:6; 12:13. They clearly were followers or supporters of King Herod. The form of the word is similar to the form of the word "Christian," which refers to one who follows or supports Christ.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See Matthew 12:9-14 and Luke 6:6-11 for their accounts of this event.

COMMENTS:

An earlier healing was performed in the synagogue on a Sabbath day (1:21). In this event, the man had a hand that had atrophied. Luke (6:6) tells us that it was his right hand. We do not know what illness caused the symptom. Verse 2 says "they" watched Him closely, but we do not know specifically who this pronoun considers. It is probably the Pharisees, but it could be the Jews in general. They were looking to see if Jesus would "violate" the Sabbath by healing. Among the behaviors the Pharisees had forbidden on the Sabbath was healing, unless it was a matter of life or death (see Luke 13:14). If Jesus healed on the Sabbath, they would "accuse" Him.

Jesus drew attention of everyone in the synagogue by having the afflicted man (ver. 3) stand in the center of the room. We can only imagine what is going through his mind. Then Jesus challenged the religious leaders: "Is it lawful to do good or to do evil on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?" By "lawful," Jesus surely meant *according to the Law of Moses*, not against their traditions. Did God forbid doing good on the Sabbath? Specifically healing a man? Giving him his life back? The Pharisees remained silent. Compare Jesus' question in Matthew 12:11.

Jesus looked at them with both anger in His heart (ver. 5) and grief, because their hearts were hardened against helping a man on the Sabbath. Subsequently, Jesus called on the man to stretch his hand out and when the man did so, the hand was no longer atrophied. It was miraculously restored to its normal strength and health.

Rather than repenting of their self-centeredness and hard-heartedness, the Pharisees left the synagogue immediately (ver. 6) and began to conspire with the Herodians against Jesus, how they might "destroy" Jesus. It is ironic, assuming that verse 6 is also the Sabbath, which "immediately" suggests is the case, that the Pharisees start planning on the Sabbath to *murder* Jesus just after they get angry at Him for *healing* on the Sabbath!

APPLICATION:

Just as with the miracle in 2:1-12, Jesus performs this miracle to prove that His message is true: the Jews need to repent and believe His good news. But everyone is not going to be moved by miracles happening in front of them. We assume this afflicted and healed man became a follower of Jesus! This passage shows that Jesus did get angry, but He did not allow His anger to motivate Him to sin. See Ephesians 4:26-27 for Paul's discussion of anger felt by Christians. In the words of Jesus, we should judge (and be angry) with righteous judgment: John 7:24. This word for "anger" is used three dozen times in the NT. Paul tells Christians to set it aside (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8). See also James 1:19-20. If one will be angry but not sin, he should only become angry at sinful behavior, as Jesus does here.

For further interactions between Jesus and the religious leaders on the Sabbath, see: 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-16; 7:21-24; 9:13-16.

The Scriptures teach that if a Christian knows and has the opportunity to do good, it would be sinful not to do it (Prov. 3:27-28; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17).

TRANSLATION - 3:7-12:

7 And Jesus with His disciples went away to the sea, and a great crowd from Galilee [followed Him], and from Judea. **8** And from Jerusalem and from Idumea and the area beyond the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon, a great crowd hearing what He was doing came to Him. **9** And He said to His disciples that a boat may be prepared for Him because of the crowd lest they crowd Him. **10** For many He healed, so that [they] pressed against Him in order that Him they might touch, all having torments. **11** And the unclean spirits, whenever Him they were seeing, they fell at His feet and were crying, saying that, "You are the Son of God!" **12** And He was warning them much that they might not make Him known.

GREEK WORDS:

"Disciple" (ver. 7) was used earlier at 2:15-16. "To go away" is used 14 times in the NT, only here in Mark. "Crowd" is used 31 times in the NT, only here in Mark (3:7-8). "To follow" was used earlier at 1:18. "Judea" is used here (3:7), 10:1; 13:14, out of 43 uses in the NT. "To hear" was used earlier at 2:1. "Boat" (ver. 9) or "small boat" is used five times, four of which are in John (6:22-24; 21:8). "To be prepared" or to "stand ready" is used ten times, only here in Mark. "To crowd" or "to press" is used only here in Mark, out of ten uses. "To heal" (ver. 10) was used earlier at 1:34. "To press against" is used only here, out of 11 uses in the NT. "To touch" was seen earlier at 1:41. "Torments" or "suffering" is used three times in Mark: 3:10; 5:29, 34; but also Luke 7:21; Acts 22:24; Heb. 11:36. The word means "scourging" or "lashes." It illustrates the intensity of the illness. "Spirit" (ver. 11) was used earlier at 1:8. "Unclean" was used earlier at 1:23. The expression "unclean spirit" is used 22 times in the NT. "To see" is used here, for the first time, in Mark: 3:11; 5:15; 12:41; 15:40, 47; 16:4. "To fall at the feet" is one verb in Greek; it is used eight times, three in Mark: 3:11; 5:33; 7:25. "To cry" is used 55 times, 10 of which are in Mark. "To warn" (ver. 12) is used 29 times in the NT, first in Mark at 1:25. "Known" is used 18 times, three in Mark (3:12; 4:22; 6:14).

ARCHAEOLOGY:

"Galilee" (ver. 7) is used earlier at 1:9, 14, 16. "Jerusalem" (ver. 8) is mentioned 62 times in the NT, here for the first time in Mark (of ten uses). This is the only place "Idumea" is mentioned in the NT. It refers to the area where Esau's descendants (the Edomites) lived. Herod the Great was Idumean. "Beyond Jordan" later is transliterated as Perea, and refers to the area on the east side of Jordan. The word is used 23 times in the NT, seven in Mark. "Jordan" is mentioned 15 times in the NT, four times in Mark: 1:5, 9; 3:8; 10:1. "Tyre" is mentioned 11 times in the NT, three times in Mark: 3:8; 7:24, 31. Sidon is mentioned 9 times, only twice in Mark: 3:8; 7:31. Idumea was southeast of Judea; Perea was east and northeast; Tyre and Sidon were northwest of Galilee.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

For parallels, see Matthew 12:15-21; Luke 6:17-19.

COMMENTS:

As Jesus withdrew "to the sea," the Sea of Galilee (ver. 7), multitudes came out to Him and His disciples. Verses 7-8 show that people came to Him from all directions and, especially from Tyre and Sidon, there were likely Gentiles among the number. Jesus asked for a boat from which He could teach (see 4:1) because the crowd was pushing Him toward the water. Jesus had healed many to the extent that people even wanted to touch Him or His clothes (see Matthew 14:36). Evil spirits saw Him and confessed His identity (ver. 11), but He sternly warned them to keep silent, as He had before (1:34).

APPLICATION:

It is clear that Jesus was a busy man. He used His time wisely in service to His heavenly Father (see Eph. 5:16). Jesus healed people, which drew their attention, and then taught them. The motivation for Christians to do good work (Gal. 6:10) is so that we might honor the Father (Matt. 5:16) and motivate people to listen to the gospel message. The demons knew Who Jesus was, but they did not know that He was on His way to the cross as part of the Father's plan (1 Cor. 2:7-8).

TRANSLATION - 3:13-19:

13 And He went up to the mountain and calls whom He was desiring, and they came to Him. **14** And He made them twelve [whom also "apostles" He named] in order that they might be with Him and in order that He might send them to preach **15** and to have authority to cast out the demons. **16** [And He made the twelve,] and He gave the name to Simon, Peter, **17** and James the [son of] Zebedee and John the brother of James and He gave them the name Boanerges, which is "sons of thunder." **18** And Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the [son of] Alphaeus and Thaddeus and Simon the Canaanite. **19** And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

GREEK WORDS:

"Mountain" (ver. 13) is used 63 times in the NT, 11 in Mark. "To call" is often translated "to encourage" or to "comfort." To call beside is the more literal denotation. The verb is used 29 times in the NT, 9 times in Mark. "To want" or "to desire" is used 208 times, 25 in Mark. "Apostle" (ver. 14) refers to one "sent," which is the verb associated with the noun. The word is used only twice in Mark: 3:14; 6:30. In the NT, it is found 80 times. "To name" is used 10 times, only here in Mark. "To send" was used earlier at 1:2. The verb is related to the noun "apostle." "To preach" was used first at 1:4. "Authority" (ver. 15) or "power" is used 102 times, first at 1:22. "To cast" was used earlier at 1:12. "Demons" is used 63 times in the NT, first at 1:34. "To give" here (ver. 16) rather denotes "to set" or "to place." It is used 39 times, 8 in Mark. "Simon" is used 75 times, 11 in Mark. "Peter" is found 156 times, 20 in Mark. "James" (ver. 17) was mentioned earlier at 1:19. The name is found 42 times, 15 in Mark. "Zebedee" is found 12 times, first at Mark 1:19. "John" is found 135 times, 26 times in Mark, first at 1:4. "Boanerges" is found only here in the NT. "Thunder" is found twelve times in the NT, 10 times in Revelation. This is Mark's only use. "Andrew" (ver. 18) was used earlier at 1:16, 29. Mark mentions him four times. "Philip" is mentioned in Mark at 3:18; 6:17; 8:27. The name is found 36 times in the NT. "Bartholomew" is only mentioned in the lists of apostles: Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13. "Matthew" is named only here in Mark; it is presumed that he is the "Levi" mentioned in chapter 2. He is found five times in the NT. "Thomas" is found 11 times in the NT, only here in Mark. "Alphaeus" is also the name of Matthew's father (2:14); it is possible that this James and Matthew / Levi are brothers, but the NT does not give any further suggestion they are. The name is found five times. "Thaddeus" is found twice: Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18. "Canaanite" is found twice: Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:18. "Judas" is mentioned 44 times, but Jesus had a brother named "Jude" (Mark 6:3) so there are more than one man so named. The name is found in Mark four times: 3:19; 6:3; 14:10, 43. "Iscariot" is found 11 times, twice in Mark: 3:19; 14:10. "To betray" was used earlier at 1:14, referring to John's arrest.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The prophets predicted that Israel would be restored to relationship with God (Isa. 49:6; Ezekiel 45:8). This would, of course, happen in Jesus Christ. However, He chose twelve apostles to reflect the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 35:22-26; 49:1-28), to create His new "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16; see also Rom. 2:28-29). This reflects God's promise in the OT that Israel would be restored: Ezekiel 37:11-14; Zephaniah 3:13-15; Zechariah 9:13; Micah 2:12. Having *twelve* apostles at the start of the new kingdom / church was significant enough for Jesus that He led His existing apostles to replace Judas with Matthias (Acts 1:15-26).

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The mountain on which Jesus called His apostles is not known, cannot be unknown, and is unnecessary to know. If God had wanted us to know it, He would have told us. Since Mark felt compelled to define the Hebrew term in verse 17 (Boanerges), it shows that his audience was not native Hebrew (or Aramaic) speakers. He does something similar in 5:41; 7:11, 34; 11:9; 14:36; 15:22, 34.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

The choosing and names of the “Twelve” are found also in: Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16 as well as Acts 1:13.

COMMENTS:

The word “disciple” means a follower or learner (the Greek word gives us the word *mathematics*). The word has been used earlier at 2:15-16, 18, 23 and 3:7, 9. In verse 13, Jesus goes into the mountains / hills in order to select from among those disciples twelve men whom He will send out with a special purpose. Those twelve men are known as “apostles.” The word “disciple” reflects the individuals moving *toward* Jesus to learn. The word “apostle” reflects the individual moving *away* from Jesus to teach. The text literally says Jesus “made” them twelve, which shows that He intended them to be a formal group. They were to “be with Him” (compare the qualifications of apostles given in Acts 1:22-23) and He would send them out to preach (ver. 14). Matthew (10:8) adds that the apostles would also heal the sick, lepers, and even raise the dead.

They were also to have “authority” over demons (ver. 15), just as He had authority. Yet, His authority was divine authority; their authority was derived from Him. “The Twelve” will be mentioned in the accounts of the Gospel 27 times. The twelve whom Jesus appointed are named in verses 16-19. Jesus gave Simon the name “Peter” or “Cephas” (the Aramaic translation; see John 1:42). His brother, Andrew, is listed in verse 18; their call to discipleship is given in 1:16-18. James and John are listed next; their call was given in 1:19-20. Jesus also gave them a “nickname:” “Sons of thunder” (or “Boanerges”). This nickname perhaps alludes to their nature: 9:38; Luke 9:54. Peter, James, and John will be Jesus’ “inner circle” (5:37; 9:2; 14:33) with John being the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20-24). James will be beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-2).

Following the naming of Andrew (ver. 18), who joins the “inner circle” in Mark 13:3, Mark gives us: Philip, Bartholomew (who might be “Nathaniel” from John 1:45), Matthew, Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, and Simon the Zealot (see Luke’s designation: 6:15). “Matthew” is likely another name for “Levi,” whose call is given in 2:14. It is possible that he is the brother of James since the fathers have the same name. If this is so, the NT does not give any further information about their relationship. Luke’s lists do not have his name; instead they have “Judas, son of James.” We assume, however, they are the same person. “Zealot,” which is also translated “Cananaean,” refers to a group of Jews who were antagonistic toward the Roman Empire. In later years, the group became violent, but it does not appear from records that they were violent during this period of time. “Cananaean” is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “zealous.”

The last apostle named is the one infamously identified as the one “who betrayed Him” (ver. 19). “Iscaiot,” scholars guess, refers to his village of origin: Keriath. There are two villages named “Keriath” in the OT: Josh. 15:25; Jer. 48:24. If this identification is correct, then Judas Iscaiot was the only apostle not from Galilee. We wonder what impact this had on inter-personal relationships among the apostles. Jesus called him a “devil” (“slanderer”) in John 6:70-71. Mark alludes to Jesus’ death here at the beginning of his account of Jesus’ life.

APPLICATION:

The Twelve will be given high authority by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, as their words guide and judge the church until Jesus comes again. See Matthew 19:28; Luke 10:16; John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:13; 1 Cor. 14:37; Ephesians 2:20.

It is also important to note that Peter was never given a higher status or authority than the other apostles. The same promise that Jesus would give him (Matt. 16:18-19) was also given to the rest of the apostles (18:18). He is always mentioned first; Peter was the most impulsive to speak. God chose him to be the one whose sermon is recorded in Acts 2 (and other places) and the first to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 10; 11:17-18; 15:14). The Papacy is not a creation of God; it is a creation of man.

TRANSLATION - 3:20-30:

20 And He entered into the house; and there assembled again the crowd, so that they were not able neither bread to eat. **21** And after hearing those near him, they went out to seize Him; for they were saying that “He is out of His mind.”

22 And the scribes from Jerusalem after coming down were saying that “Beelzebub He has” and that “By the ruler of the demons He casts out the demons.” **23** And after calling them, in parables He was speaking to them, “How is Satan able to cast out Satan? **24** And if a kingdom against itself is divided, that kingdom is not able to stand. **25** And if a house against itself is divided, that house is not able to stand. **26** And if Satan arose against himself and was divided, he is not able to stand but he has an end. **27** But no one is able into the house of the strong one after entering, his vessels to plunder, unless first the strong one he may bind, and at that time his house he will plunder. **28** Truly I say to you that all will be forgiven the sons of men the sins and the blasphemies whatever they might blaspheme. **29** Whoever may blaspheme against the Holy Spirit does not have forgiveness forever, but guilty he is of an eternal sin.” **30** Because they were saying, “An unclean spirit He has.”

GREEK WORDS:

“House” (ver. 20) was used earlier at 2:1. “To assemble” is used 30 times, twice in Mark: 3:20; 14:53. “Crowd” was used earlier at 2:4. “Bread” was used earlier at 2:26. “To eat” was used earlier at 1:6. “To seize” (ver. 21) is earlier at 1:21. “To be out of one’s mind” is all one verb in Greek; it is used 17 times in the NT, first in Mark at 2:12. “Scribes” (ver. 22) is used 63 times in the NT, in Mark first at 1:22. “Beelzebub” is mentioned 7 times in the NT: Matt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18-19. “Ruler” can also mean “beginning.” The word is used 37 times in the NT, only here in Mark. On “demons,” see 1:34. “Satan” (ver. 23) was first mentioned at 1:13. “Kingdom” (ver. 24) is found earlier at 1:15. “To be divided” is used in Mark at 3:24-26; 6:41. The word is found a total of 14 times in the NT. “To arise” (ver. 26) was used earlier at 1:35. “End” is used 40 times in the NT, three times in Mark: 3:26; 13:7, 13. “Strong one” (ver. 27) is used 29 times, three times in Mark: 1:7; 3:27. “Vessels” refers to any objects in general; the word is used 23 times, in Mark at 3:27 and 11:16. “To plunder” is found three times: Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27. “To bind” is used 43 times, in Mark 8 times. “Truly” (ver. 28) in the Greek language is a transliteration of the Hebrew word for “true.” The English is a transliteration of the Greek term. It is related to the verb “to believe.” The word is found 129 times in the NT, 14 in Mark. The expression “Truly I say to you” is found 76 times in the gospel accounts. “Truly, truly” is found 25 times in the gospel of John. “To forgive” is used earlier at 1:18. “Sins” is found only four times in the NT: Mark 3:28-29; Rom. 3:25; 1 Cor. 6:18. “Blasphemy” is used three times in Mark: 3:28; 7:22; 14:64, out of 18 uses in the NT. The related verb “to blaspheme” was used earlier at 2:7. “Guilty” (ver. 29) is found 10 times; only in Mark at 3:29; 14:64.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

“Beelzebub” was the designation for a Canaanite god (2 Kings 1:2). Scholars do not know what the name means; most guess it means “lord of the flies.” It might be that vers 27 is an allusion to Isaiah 49:24 and verse 29 might allude to Isaiah 63:10.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

See Matthew 12:22-32; Luke 11:14-23; 12:10 for parallel accounts of this event. Casting out demons is the most frequent miraculous act recorded of Jesus: 1:21-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-29. This act is also found in the summaries of 1:34, 39; 3:10-11 and among the works of the apostles: 3:15; 6:7-13.

COMMENTS:

Jesus then returned home - probably the house in Capernaum - and the crowds gathered around to such an extent that He and His disciples could not eat (ver. 20). In verse 21, the Greek text is ambiguous, simply saying "those near Him." The Bible student is left to wonder if this phrase refers to Jesus' family, friends, or those from Nazareth. Since His family is specifically mentioned in verse 31, it is assumed that they are in view here as well. Verse 21 notes that these people wanted to take Jesus away from the crowds because they thought, in some way, that He had lost His senses. Perhaps they were thinking that His popularity was blinding Him to the opposition He was stirring up among the Pharisees.

On the other hand, scribes who had come to Capernaum from Jerusalem, likely because of His popularity, were saying that Jesus was possessed by "Beelzebub" (ver. 22). While this designation referred to a god of the Canaanites, by NT times, it was a designation for Satan. The scribes make this clear when they further the accusation: "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons." Rather than accepting the evidence of His miracles and coming to faith in Him through His message (see John 20:30-31), the scribes decided to make an outrageous accusation. The parallel to this event is recorded in Matthew 12:22-32 but the scribes were making this accusation as early as Matthew 9:34. See also John 10:20; 7:20; 8:48, 52. This event and the antagonism we see between the leaders and Jesus illustrates to us why Jesus refused to allow the demons to confess Him publicly (1:34; 3:12).

Against this accusation, Jesus responds with logic and common sense. Mark identifies this series of statements as "parables" (ver. 23) which simply means Jesus is illustrating His point with common objects. First, how can Satan cast out Satan? The very suggestion is ludicrous. Secondly, a kingdom divided against itself will not stand (ver. 24). Third, even a house divided against itself will not have success (ver. 25). Consequently, if Satan casts himself out of people (by casting out his own demons), he is divided; he cannot stand; "he has an end." This is all very logical. Of course, the demons themselves have already refuted the claim in 1:24.

Jesus then goes further to make the theological point as to why God allowed demon-possession in the first century (ver. 27). A man cannot plunder another's house unless he binds the man. Then he can plunder his house. The unspoken application is that if Jesus can enter a man's soul and expel the demon from within him, then Jesus is more powerful than Satan, the demon's master. In Matthew's account (12:28), Jesus identified the power behind His exorcisms as the Holy Spirit. In Luke's account (11:20), Jesus identified the power as the "finger of God."

But Jesus was not finished rebuking the scribes for their ludicrous assertion that He was casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus emphasizes what He is about to say, by saying "Truly, I say to you." This expression is not found in any other Jewish writings and His apostles never use the expression. A double "Amen" is, however, found in a few passage: Num. 5:22; Neh. 8:6; Psa. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52. The OT equivalent phrase is "Thus says the Lord." This expression is used 419 times throughout the OT! For Jesus to assume this authority, rather than quoting inspired men or Jehovah God as other prophets did, means that Jesus *is* Jehovah God in the flesh!

All sins can be forgiven (ver. 28), including speaking evil (blaspheming) against others. Yet, speaking evil against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven - ever. Such an individual was guilty of an "eternal" sin, which would bring eternal condemnation. To clarify the point, in verse

30, Mark writes that Jesus warned about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit “because they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’”

While much has been written about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, it seems rather straightforward once we limit ourselves to what the Scriptures actually say. The scribes were accusing Jesus of casting out evil spirits, not by the power of the divine Holy Spirit, but by the power of the evil one. Because the Holy Spirit was behind the powers of Jesus (Luke 4:14), for the scribes to attribute that power to Satan, rather than the Holy Spirit, was getting the whole plan of salvation backwards! In fact, how could they ever accept the miracles Jesus did if they rejected the *source* of those miracles!? Today, we have never heard or read of anyone actually ascribing the power of Jesus to that of Satan. While it may be possible for one’s heart to be so dark that he would say that, the sin does not seem to be committed today.

APPLICATION:

Jesus will not be the last to be accused of being out of His mind; the apostle Paul was as well (Acts 26:24-25). Christians should not be surprised if they are also accused of being irrational when they teach and preach the gospel of Christ. The exorcisms were allowed and intended by God to prove Jesus’ power over Satan. They were visible lessons to show the truth behind 1 John 3:8: Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. Christians should not be afraid of Satan because Jesus has more power than the devil does (see Romans 16:20).

The principle found in verses 23-26 also applies to families and congregations of Christians. Division will bring about destruction. Unity brings stability (see Eph. 4:1-6). Finally, no further passage outside of this event warns against an “unforgivable” sin. It is likely not committed very often. Those who are concerned about committing such a sin show, by their very concern, that they are not committing the sin!

Speaking badly about other people (blasphemy) is forbidden to Christians: Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 10:30; Mark 7:22.

TRANSLATION - 3:31-35:

31 And there came His mother and His brothers and outside standing, they sent to Him calling Him. **32** And a crowd sat around Him, and they say to Him, “Behold Your mother and Your brothers [and Your sisters] outside are seeking You.”

33 And after answering them He says, “Who is My mother and [My] brothers? **34** And after looking around at those around Him in a circle sitting He says, “Behold My mother and My brothers. **35** [For] whoever may do the will of God, this one is My brother and sister and mother.”

GREEK WORDS:

“Mother” (ver. 31) is found 83 times in the NT, 17 in Mark. “Brother” is found 343 times, 20 times in Mark. “To call” is found 148 times; it is found in Mark earlier at 1:20. “Sister” (ver. 32) is used 26 times in the NT, five times in Mark: 3:32, 35; 6:3; 10:29-30. “To answer” (ver. 33) is used 231 times, 30 in Mark. “Circle” (ver. 34) is found 8 times in the NT, three times in Mark: 3:34; 6:6, 36. “Behold” is used 29 times in the NT, first in Mark at 2:24. “Will” (ver. 35) is used 62 times in the NT, only here in Mark.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

If Jesus’ family were living in Nazareth at this point, then they traveled 30 miles (48 km) to Capernaum.

PARALLELS IN THE OTHER GOSPELS:

The parallel accounts on the family of Jesus are found in Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 8:19-21.

COMMENTS:

We have seen a possible reference to Jesus' family in verse 21. Here is a clear reference to His family, which hasn't been mentioned yet by Mark. Mark will name His brothers in Mark 6:3. John tells us (7:5) that prior to the resurrection, His brothers did not believe in Him. But Jesus will appear to His brothers, at least James (1 Cor. 15:7) after His resurrection. Scholars believe this James is the author of the letter and Jesus' brother Jude authored his letter.

Jesus' family stands outside the crowd and calls for Him. If they are the same group as in verse 21, they might be thinking that Jesus is in danger of harm so they want to draw Him away from the public. However, Jesus will be led by His heavenly father, not His earthly mother. When some inform Him of His family's efforts, He asks the question: "Who are My mother and brothers?" Looking around at His own followers, He states (ver. 35): "Whoever may do the will of God, this one is My brother and sister and mother." Jesus states clearly that a spiritual relationship with Him is more important than a physical relationship with Him. He also states clearly that obedience to the will of God is fundamental to such a spiritual relationship. The "sister" and "mother" in verse 35 reveals that Jesus intends for His disciples to include females as well as males. Jesus will have females among His disciples: 15:40-41; Luke 8:2-3.

APPLICATION:

While Mary was blessed to be chosen as the mother of Jesus on earth (Luke 1:30, 42, 46-49), it is not appropriate and misleading to venerate her in some special way to elevate her above other women. The NT never commands such treatment of Mary and no inspired man ever commanded such holy treatment of Mary. It has its origin in man's imagination. It is also misleading to designate Mary with such an exalted title as "Mother of God." While Jesus is divine ("God") by nature and Mary is Jesus' mother, she is emphatically not the mother of His divine nature, nor of "God" in His essence. Nor is it appropriate to give her titles as Jesus specifically commanded His followers not to use religious titles (Matt. 23:8-9).

The church of Christ, while not having women in leadership roles (according to 1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15), will be composed and served in irreplaceable ways by women: Acts 2:18; 21:9; Romans 16:1 (several of the names mentioned in Romans 16 are female); 1 Cor. 11:5; Philippians 4:2.