

# The Gospel of Mark

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## Chapter Three

### Mark 3:1-6 NAS77

*And He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there with a withered hand. (2) And they were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, in order that they might accuse Him. (3) And He \*said to the man with the withered hand, "Rise and come forward!" (4) And He \*said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. (5) And after looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He \*said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. (6) And the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.*

Mark presents his last of five conflict instances with the Jewish authorities. This one concerns the attitude of Jesus toward the Sabbath. Mark does not tell the location or when this occurred during the ministry of Jesus. Mark does not identify the people watching Him but Luke also recorded this event so we know the questioners were the Pharisees and scribes: *"And it came about on another Sabbath, that He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. (7) And the scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely, to see if He healed on the Sabbath, in order that they might find reason to accuse Him."* (Luke 6:6-7) They were looking to see if they could find another instance to accuse Jesus of breaking one of their laws. From the phrasing, Mark makes it clear that the people knew that Jesus had the power to heal but they were looking to see if He would do it on the Sabbath. Rabbinic law allowed healing on the Sabbath only if a life were immediately threatened and clearly this man's condition was not life-threatening. Jesus knew what they were thinking so He asked the man to come forward so that everyone in the synagogue could see what Jesus did. They did not ask Him a question so Jesus asked them a question concerning what is lawful on the Sabbath. The Pharisees and scribes did not answer Jesus because the law did not allow specifically for them to be able to answer such a question. Actually none of the events Jesus mentioned were lawful by Jewish law unless a person's life was an issue so no simple answer was possible.

The reporting of Jesus being angry is rare in the gospels and the tenses of the words are very meaningful. "Looking around at them in anger" is aorist tense and so is a momentary expression. "Grieved", or "deeply distresses" as some translations present it, is present tense and so is continuous. Jesus was continually grieved at their lack of being able to understand Who He was and His mission. His anger was an immediate reaction against the diseases and disfigurements resulting from Satan's reign in the world due to Sin. There is no indication that this man specifically sinned with his withered hand resulting but certainly all such are the result of mankind's submission to the rule of Satan. Jesus asked the man to stretch out his hand and when he obeyed Jesus the hand was restored as Jesus restored order to this situation. The reaction of the Pharisees was predictable based upon their previous behavior toward Jesus. It is not known

exactly who the Herodians were but they were probably friends and supporters of the Herod family who were supporters of Rome and received their authority from Rome. They were a political party that supported King Herod Antipas, the Roman Empire's ruler over much of the land of the Jews from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. They joined the Pharisees in their actions against Jesus probably because they feared the actions of Jesus might incite some political actions against Palestine that would be problematic for their political power. Herod himself wanted Jesus dead (Luke 13:31), and the Pharisees had already plotted against Him (John 11:53), so they joined efforts to achieve their common goal.

#### Mark 3:7-10

*And Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, (8) and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. (9) And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the multitude, in order that they might not crowd Him; (10) for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed about Him in order to touch Him.*

Jesus then left this area and went to the Sea of Galilee with His disciples. However a great number of people followed Him as they wanted to receive the healing ministry of Jesus. People came from the south (Jerusalem, Idumea), the east (across the Jordan), and the northwest (Tyre and Sidon). The only area in which Jesus was not active was Idumea, the area south of Hebron. Idumea was invaded and conquered by the Edomites after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. Herod the Great was from Idumea. Tyre and Sidon are used almost interchangeably for the region northwesterly of Palestine. The region beyond the Jordan probably referred to Perea and the Decapolis, which were under the control of Herod Antipas. Only Mark reports the incident with the boat that would have served to help Jesus escape from the crowds if they became unruly. The crowds were attracted to Jesus because of His healing powers and not for other reasons but Jesus graciously healed many of them. Matthew also reports the healings:

Matt 4:23-25 NAS77 “And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. (24) And the news about Him went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. (25) And great multitudes followed Him from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.”

#### Mark 3:11-15

*And whenever the unclean spirits beheld Him, they would fall down before Him and cry out, saying, "You are the Son of God!" (12) And He earnestly warned them not to make Him known. (13) And He \*went up to the mountain and \*summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. (14) And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, (15) and to have authority to cast out the demons.*

Jesus again came into contact with the demons who immediately knew the real identity of Jesus. Their crying out that He was the Son of God was probably an attempt at causing Him to be harmless but, of course, it had no such effect. A superstitious understanding was that if the true name of a person with powers was known he would lose his ability to work the miracles. Of course calling Him the Son of God was a precise statement but such a superstition cannot control God. The demons were not an appropriate herald of His identity and He quieted them because the time was not yet ripe for the announcement. He then went up to the hill country around the Sea of Galilee to summon those whom He wanted as His disciples as also narrated by Matthew who then gives the Beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12). Luke reports that Jesus spent a night in prayer before choosing the twelve (Luke 6:12). Mark here announces the reason for the appointment of the twelve and he will elaborate on them in the next section. He choose them to preach and to have authority over the demons for both are needed in the war against Satan. These men would be closely associated with Jesus as He taught them what was needed to accomplish His goals. Surely twelve has a theological significance as they represent the new Israel in embryo.

### **Mark 3:16-20**

*And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), (17) and James, the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); (18) and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; (19) and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. (20) And He \*came home, and the multitude \*gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.*

What an interesting group of men Jesus chose to represent Him to the world in establishing the church! None of these men had any theological training and we know little about most of them. One was a hated tax collector, four were fishermen, and one was a member of a radical and violent political party. Scripture gives us three other lists of these disciples (Matt 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13). Judas is not mentioned in Acts since he had already committed suicide. Peter hardly demonstrated later characteristics that would justify calling him Peter but perhaps Jesus chose this name for what Peter would become after Pentecost. Peter naturally was unreliable and fickle and even after being indwelt by the Holy Spirit he would demonstrate some character traits that hardly justify being nicknamed Peter. Thaddaeus is probably the Judas son of James in Luke's lists (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Simon is called the Zealot probably because of his membership in the party of the Zealots who were zealous to overthrow Roman rule. James and John were called Sons of Thunder probably because of their disposition. Bartholomew is not a personal name but a patriot name meaning "son of Talmi" and he probably had another name that perhaps was Nathaniel of John 1:45. Jesus then retreated to the house of Peter and Andrew, which became so full of people that they could not even have space to gather for a meal.

### **Mark 3:21-22**

*And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses." (22) And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."*

Mark refers to “his own people”, probably meaning His family for they would have become concerned that He was not able to take care of His physical needs. They were concerned that exhaustion and lack of proper nutrition had taken a toll on Him and they needed to care for Him. His family was in Nazareth and He was probably in Capernaum so there would have been a time lapse while they took Him to their home. Mark fills in this time interval with the Beelzebul controversy. The scribes are described as coming down from Jerusalem for the city is at about 4000 feet above sea level and they would have come down from that height. Mark does not give an account of the healing of the blind-and-dumb demoniac that prompted this discussion (Matt 12:22; Luke 11:14). Beelzebul refers to Satan so Jesus is accused of being in collaboration with Satan to cast out demons.

### **Mark 3:23-27**

*And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? (24) "And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. (25) "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. (26) "And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! (27) "But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.*

They must have been rather desperate to come up with some charge against Jesus for saying that He was in league with Satan to cast out Satan’s accomplices is ludicrous. He then gives three applications of their accusation: Satan casting out Satan, a divided kingdom, and a divided house. The work that Jesus is doing is against spiritual forces but He gives examples of a kingdom and a house to reason with them concerning the absurdity of their accusation. So if Satan has risen against himself and he rules over a divided kingdom then he certainly cannot continue to rule. Jesus then states His strategy, which is to first bind the ruler (Satan) and then plunder his kingdom. Satan continues to be bound by Jesus but he continues on a long chain until the final End.

### **Mark 3:28- 30**

*"Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; (29) but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"-- (30) because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."*

Mark records this statement of Jesus because the Pharisees and scribes have attributed to the Holy Spirit the acts of Satan and they need to be told the seriousness of their actions. This statement has bothered people in the church ever since it was recorded as even redeemed people wonder if they have committed this sin and so are forever under the wrath of God. The truth is that if anyone is worried over having committed this act against the Holy Spirit it is very unlikely that they really have. The unredeemed are so committed to the rule of Satan that they do not even consider the Holy Spirit as part of reality. They probably call themselves atheists and are deaf and blind to the things of God. There was a person in one of our Bible study groups who was worried about this statement but when he understood that even though he did sin, he was not a repeater of sin and was sincerely grieved when the Holy Spirit convicted him of his sin. There are two other scriptural verses dealing with unforgiveable sin:

- Heb 6:4-6 NAS77 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.
- 2Peter 2:20-22 NAS77 For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. (21) For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. (22) It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

In both of the above cases, people have been taught some of the holy things by the Holy Spirit but they then reject them as they show that they were never redeemed children of God as also stated by John: *"They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us."* (1 John 2:19) One has to know something about the Holy Spirit to actually blaspheme Him and those who do so have removed themselves from the possibility of being born again. The people accusing Jesus of being in cohort with Satan even though His actions show that He is not because He acts against Satan have blasphemed the Holy Spirit. They close their eyes and ears to the truth and so remove themselves from the possible actions of the Holy Spirit in their life.

### **Mark 3:31-35**

*And His mother and His brothers \*arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him, and called Him. (32) And a multitude was sitting around Him, and they \*said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." (33) And answering them, He \*said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" (34) And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He \*said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! (35) "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."*

Probably because of the huge crowds of people gathered to hopefully receive miracles of healing or casting out of demons His family could not come into see Him. This is the only mention of His mother by Mark and Joseph is not mentioned so probably he was no longer alive at this time. Some of the crowd told Jesus that His mother and brothers were outside looking for Him. He replied by asking a question concerning those who are His mother and brothers. He looked at His disciples and answered His question by stating that those who do the will of God are His family. Everyone is not a child of God as some people state but only those who believe in His name: *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,"* (John 1:12) So His family are not all the people gathered around Him in hopes of receiving miracles but only those who believe in His name. The disciples, except for Judas, had demonstrated their believe in His name by agreeing to be His disciples.