

Idumea was south of Galilee; east of the Jordan River was Perea, and Tyre and Sidon were to the northwest. Like Galilee, Idumea and Perea were religiously Jewish territories once dominated by Gentiles; Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities, although it seems most likely here that Jewish residents of those cities are intended (see 7:27).

Finally Jesus has to find another way to deal with the growing crowds (3:9). Any prophet supposed to perform signs drew large crowds in Jewish Palestine, and Jesus seems to have drawn larger crowds than most others. Other “signs prophets” sometimes tried miracles like making the walls of Jerusalem fall down or the Jordan part (they failed), but no prophets since Elijah and Elisha had been reported as doing as many healing miracles as Jesus.

3:13. Mountains were often places for communion with God (e.g., the experiences of Moses and Elijah).

3:14-15. Israel consisted of twelve tribes, and if groups chose twelve leaders (as apparently those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls did), they did so because they believed that their own group was the true, obedient remnant of Israel. “Apostles” means commissioned representatives, the point here being that Jesus’ authority to proclaim the kingdom and expel demons continues through his followers. The crowds come (cf. Mt. 12:15-21; Lk. 6:17-19). Although the religious teachers may have rejected him, the crowds did not, at least not yet and based on what is was that were finding so different or at least beneficial to them.

It is interesting, that sometimes ordinary people can see what the theologians are blind to. The crowds continued to flock to Jesus, probably mostly for healing. On this occasion there were so many that Jesus had to sit in a boat in order to teach the people who were on the shore around. He also healed sick people and drove out demons, though he would not allow them to speak. The evil spirits recognized Jesus as the Son of God. God had called Jesus his ‘Son’ at his baptism (1:11), and the Roman officer would give the title to him at the cross (15:39). Jesus himself accepted it before the high priest at his trial, when there was no longer any need to hide it and the

No for some when we have information in one Gospel that seems, and I stress seems to say something different, it can cause difficulty. In light of that truth let's examine the names of the 12 disciples Jesus calls to himself.

Luke lists "Judas son of James" rather than Matthew's and Mark's "Thaddeus." Ancient business documents show that people were commonly known by several different names, so the different lists of apostles probably do refer to the same people. (The differences in the lists do show that the lists were not copied from one another or standardized, and thus that the tradition of Jesus choosing twelve is older than the particular lists themselves.) Nicknames were common, appearing even on tomb inscriptions.

"Cananaean" is Aramaic for "zealot" (Luke 6:15); thus some translations simply read "Simon the Zealot" here. In this period, this term could just mean "zealous one," but it may mean that he had been involved in revolutionary activity (some revolutionaries soon after this time came to be known as "Zealots"). "Boanerges" is a Greek rendering of the Aramaic for "sons of thunder" (rgs for Aramaic rꞓm ). "Iscaiot" may mean "man from Kerioth," but this is unclear; other proposals (e.g., a Greek transliteration of an Aramaic corruption of the Latin sicarius, "assassin"; see comment on Acts 21:38) are equally uncertain.

Appointing the Twelve (see Mt. 10:1-4; Lk. 6:12-16). We know from the other gospels that the reason Jesus went up the mountain was to pray before making such an important choice. Even the Son of God needed to find a place where he could be alone with God, and there was no quiet anywhere else. [p. 955] Jesus taught us to seek privacy for prayer if at all possible (Mt. 6:6).

When Jesus calls us to respond to him, his love compels us to follow. These twelve were Jesus' 'team' (as we might speak of a football 'eleven' today) appointed to work together with him and with one another. He refers to them in terms of his wider family in vs 31-35. Mark does not elsewhere call them apostles, though this is

the name that they were known by later. For this reason some manuscripts leave out the word here. But, whether we use the name or not, they were all Jesus' missionaries, and Mark the missionary knew that very well. We can see what 'apostle' means from v 14. Jesus chose these men so that he could send them out to preach the good news, just as he was doing himself. However, before they would be ready to preach the good news they had to spend time with Jesus and learn to pattern their lives on him. If we do not follow their example, our preaching will be like loudspeakers blaring meaningless propaganda.

They also had to show the power of Jesus and the Spirit by conquering the enemy, as Jesus had done. So Jesus committed to them his power to drive out demons (Matthew adds the power of healing sicknesses in his name). These were both signs of the coming of the kingdom of God. It is important to notice that Jesus shared his power with very imperfect humans, like us. Indeed, Mark seems throughout the whole of his gospel to go out of his way to emphasize the imperfections of the Twelve and especially of Peter, who in many ways was the leader. In doing this, Mark was simply describing the facts; he was not trying to belittle the apostles, as some have suggested. It makes God's grace all the more wonderful (as Paul saw; 2 Cor. 4:7) that there are no supermen or superwomen in the NT, only sinners saved by grace. The other gospel writers softened down some of the stories, but Mark wants to show us that the apostles were people just like us, with all our weaknesses. NT 'saints' do not have bright haloes around their heads; that was an invention of the later church!

Another point that also emphasizes the apostles' 'ordinariness' is that they mostly had nicknames, some given by Jesus himself. In most parts of the world, people are known by nicknames describing their character rather than by their real names. These disciples were real-life people.

So there was Simon, whom Jesus nicknamed 'Peter' or 'The Rock', and James and John, whom he nicknamed Sons of Thunder (or 'Thunder and Lightning' as we might say today). Thomas was called 'the Twin', and another Simon was called 'the Zealot'.

When we remember boastful Simon, who denied Jesus, Thomas, who doubted him, James and John, who were ambitious for themselves and all the disciples, who ran away terrified when Jesus was arrested, we are not glorifying their weaknesses but glorifying the God who can use people as weak as they were, and we are (2 Cor. 12:9-11)

"9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 11 I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody." 2 Corinthians 12:9-11, NAS95.

3:20-30 Blasphemy against the Spirit (see Mt. 12:22-37; Lk. 11:14-23). Even the family of Jesus thought that he must be out of his mind. Many of God's most faithful servants have faced this same charge. But the teachers of the law who must have come down from Jerusalem on a special commission of enquiry, went further in their spite. They said that Jesus was not mad, but demon-possessed. Beelzebub seems to be another name for Satan here. For more on the spelling of the name and its exact meaning, see the larger commentaries. The Bible teaches us that we have only one spiritual enemy, even if he has many servants; and he is a defeated enemy already.

It is hard to believe that even the teachers of the law thought this accusation was true but they were not showing any better knowledge of other Scriptures but only trying to use Scripture for their own advantage - that is why Jesus' rebuke was so severe.

First, he showed how utterly preposterous, forget that, how stupid the suggestion of a 'civil war' within Satan himself is. Then he pointed out that his expulsion of demons meant a victory over the enemy, not a siding with him. Lastly, he gave a grave warning about the only unforgivable sin in the Bible, the sin against the Holy Spirit. This seems to mean the deliberate closing of the heart and mind to the witness of the Spirit through to Jesus, something of which the teachers had just shown themselves to be guilty. Such a willful and deliberate twisting of truth makes repentance and salvation

impossible. All other sins could be forgiven. We must remember that this particular sin cannot be committed today. It showed the hardness of the heart of those who should have known better and perhaps did, but they let their personal agenda be more important than the truths God had given Israel.

To hold fast to these truths will save sensitive souls much agony, especially those who have been forced to blaspheme Christ in times of persecution. We may think of Saul of Tarsus, who tried to force early Jewish Christians to blaspheme (Acts 26:11), or dictatorships and Communist governments in our own day. Peter cursed and swore that he did not know Jesus, and if he could repent and be forgiven, so can we.

It is most important, especially in a world where he seems so powerful, that we realize that the enemy has already been defeated. Every time in Mark's gospel that Jesus drives out Satan from the life of a person and frees him or her from his power, we have another proof of that. Satan's defeat is equally true whether he shows his power in non-Christian religions (third-world Christians will know that while there may be some truth in them, there is also often something of the demonic), or 'magic' and 'spells', or the revival of satanism and the occult in the West today. The strong man has been already conquered and tied up: the battle has been fought and won, and now there are only 'mopping-up' operations. The reference to possessions being carried off indicates that those whom the enemy possessed before can now go free.

Exorcists often invoked a higher spirit to get rid of a lower one, so Jesus' opponents accuse him of gaining his power for exorcism from sorcery—relying on Satan himself. Insanity (3:21) was often associated with demon possession (3:22). Because false teachers were sometimes thought to be inspired by demons and the official penalty for misleading God's people this way was death (Deut 13:5; 18:20), Jesus' family had reason to want to reach him before the legal experts did. (The legal experts could not enforce the death penalty, because Palestine was under Roman domination; but the public charge alone would humiliate the family.) Teachers offended by reports of the events of 2:1-3:6 are now taking the offensive.

This is the kingdom work that Christ has done. This is not the work of you or me.

We do not bind Satan. If this were so then:

1. with all the praying that attempts to do he should be continuously bound
2. if he is not then all those prayers must not be God's will
3. or everyone is in some sin where God will not answer prayer

3:31-35 The family of Christ (see Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:19-21). The misunderstanding of God's kingdom and its demands continues. In v 21, even his own family had thought Jesus out of his mind and had wanted to take him home. Here, his mother and brothers came looking for him—was it for the same reason? Both they and the crowd would have assumed that Jesus would stop his teaching at once and come out to see them, as respect for parents was one of the Ten Commandments. Instead, Jesus pointed to a loyalty and a commandment far more basic, a claim of God that went far deeper than the claims of any earthly family. The priorities of God's kingdom are different, and this is bound to be a stumbling-block in the eyes of this world. Jesus said that whoever does God's will (note the usual contrast between merely 'hearing' and actually 'doing') is closer to him than any of his blood-relatives. Remember that, as yet, his brothers did not believe in him, and even Mary cannot have completely understood him, or she would not have come on this trip. This word will bring great comfort to some of us who were rejected by home and family when we became Christians, but who found in this 'family of Christ' love and support. This does not mean that Jesus ceased to love and care for his mother, or that Christians have no responsibility for their own family members who do not turn to Christ. It is only that Jesus must always come first, no matter how much pain that may cause to us or others. Only those who love Christ more than their nearest and dearest can be his disciples.

However, this is totally different from the teaching of the various cults who insist on total physical separation from family members who do not join the sect. Some extreme Christian groups also hold this wrong view.

In light of this large text we have studied this morning and have gotten the sense of its meaning as part of the larger narrative lets meditate on a few things that help us to focus our love to the One who first loved us.

If I truly believe that Jesus is my New Covenant and He is the New lawgiver and he himself is my Law and it is by him that I understand how to understand the Scriptures what I can do to be the New covenant person that I am supposed to be in Christ.?

How willing am I to meet with people who have a real desire to at least try and understand the truth of Christ. Their motives may be wrong but how available am I.

They came from all over to see Jesus. It may only have been for a healing but it still gave Christ the opportunity to show his compassion, He did not just walk away, He did what he could and yet He was not attempting to make a show of himself or be popular and famous. He was becoming that by the very nature of what He came to teach and to do as works.

Jesus appointed 12 ordinary men, 11 of whom in the end would, in his power, go on to do extraordinary things throughout the known world. One of them was a traitor. One was not a true believer but was even temporarily empowered to cast out demons and heal in Jesus name. One may genuinely debate as to whether or not the other disciples were truly saved yet, but that does not diminish the fact that nothing can deter the sovereign purposes of God when it comes to preaching the Gospel.

God by past, present and future grace calls His disciples and keeps them for his purposes, forever. There is the potential for there being false Christians among any body of believers at any time. Some of them may seem to be the most gifted and talen of people. But for those who are genuine, we are like the others. Most of us are just ordinary people facing the realities of everyday life with some uncertainty of the events that will occur each day and with the weaknesses that will cause us to stumble along the way to our final literal rest in Christ. Yet, we belong to Christa and He is fully aware of every weakness and struggle that we encounter.

We come from varied backgrounds yet God has brought us together for one purpose,

People may have ridiculed you, your family and friends or co-workers may not understand you or even want anything to do with you but we can live for the glory of Christ because we have been born again to a living hope. Our optimism for what we have in Christ is real and our pessimism of the condition of the world is real yet we know that Christ has conquered the enemy of our soul and the enemies of sin and death that would see us condemned forever.

There is no sin that is unforgivable and that should encourage us to preach the Gospel to the worst people we encounter and also to realize that Christ will forgive our sins as believers when we repent. We will sin and we will be forgiven for true believers must repent and seek God's forgiveness.

The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was denying the work of Christ by the power of the Spirit, yet priests and Pharisees were saved after Pentecost.

But when the Holy Spirit no longer brings conviction to a person about their sin and the truth of Christ there can be no repentance and faith which saves, their sin is then unpardonable. Paul was Christ hater. He knew what Jesus did. He was a denier of the work of the Spirit through Jesus yet He was saved.