

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

SESSION 4:

CHAPTER 3: 7 - 35

"MIXED REACTIONS"



It is very interesting to see the different reactions that people have to Jesus in this chapter. Some hear him gladly and some, including his own family, are not sure what to make of his strange and different behaviour.

Read Mark 3: 7 - 11

QUESTIONS:

While the Pharisees and the Herodians are plotting to kill Jesus;

- 1(a). How are the common people responding to him?
How many and from where?
- (b) What sorts of problems did his popularity produce?
How did the disciples cope with the press of the crowd here?
- (c) What was the reaction of the "demon-possessed"?
How did Jesus address them?
Why doesn't he want the unclean spirits to reveal his identity?
- (d) How can we know from this passage that "orthodox belief" is not enough for the complete Christian life?

Read Mark 3: 12 - 19

- 2.(a) Where does Jesus now go?
Might this be significant in any way?
- (b) How does Mark describe the "selection" of the Twelve?
What, if anything, marked these disciples out?
- (c) Why did Jesus choose twelve men?
What about the women??
- (d) For what specific purposes does Jesus call twelve of his followers?



(e) How do Jesus' plans for the twelve (vv. 14-15) fit in with his original call to the four fishermen in Galilee (1:17)?

NB Although everyone refers to the "12 tribes of Israel" there are effectively 13. Jacob had 12 sons but each of Joseph's two sons was in Genesis assigned a tribe of his own. The "tribe" of Levites had no territory of their own.... They were "priestly"! Austin Farrer noted that although Mark here has Jesus calling the 12 but a chapter earlier he has called a tax-collector called Levi who is not included in this list (We identify Matthew with Levi because of the first canonical gospel!)

Is Mark either affirming the full correspondence between those Jesus calls and Israel's tribes or injecting a subtle reminder that there was something not quite right about the numbering?... it is interesting that Levi, the name associated with the tribe most associated with ritual purity, should here belong to a despised tax collector!

WILLIAM PLACHER

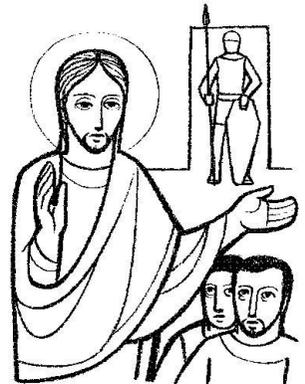
'Iscariot' is not explained by Mark, though Judas' best known deed is alluded to. Anderson makes the valuable point that a group of special disciples whose list of names begins with Peter who denied Jesus, and ends with Judas who betrayed him, makes it abundantly clear that they were not a collection of the immediately perfect. Discipleship, like apostleship, is also a long hard road of temptation and trial.

JOHN STOTT

Read Mark 3: 20 - 35

- 3.(a) What was the attitude of the crowd to Jesus?
What did his friends and family think?
What was the approach of the teachers of the Law?
- (b) How does Jesus refute the charges brought against him by these religious leaders?
Jesus compares himself to a strong man plundering a house. How does this help to answer the question about being in league with the devil?

NB Verse 22 reads literally, "He has Beelzebub," which parallels the charge that he has an unclean spirit (3:30). The origin of the term Beelzebub is vague, but it clearly is connected to "the prince of demons." The name may be a perversion of the name of a Philistine deity lampooned as "the lord of the flies." Beelzebub (which some MSS. read here) is identified as the prince of the demons in the *Testament of Solomon* 2:9-4:2.



According to a rabbinic tradition, Jesus was condemned to death for practicing sorcery and misleading the people:

It has been taught: On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu. And an announcer went out, in front of him, for fourteen days [saying]: "He is going to be stoned because he practiced sorcery."

This tradition independently confirms that Jesus was well known for doing miracles even though it attributes the source of his wonders to an evil power.

ARNOLD

(c) By charging Jesus with being demon-possessed, how were they approaching the brink of total and unforgivable blindness to the truth?

(d) What is blasphemy and why is it so serious?

Does it include "swearing"?

Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit an eternal sin?

NB *Mark indicates that Jesus gave the teachers of the Law this warning about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit because they were saying that he had an evil or unclean spirit.*

Mark here uses "intercalation" for the first time – this is the 'sandwich' technique of placing a second 'story' between the beginning and end of a first 'story' to emphasise their relationship. He will use it regularly!

(e) How is it being used here?

4.(a) Jesus' mother and brother come for him because they believe he is out of his mind (vv. 21, 31-32)

How do you think this made Jesus feel?

(b) In the words of v.35f, is Jesus denying the commandment to honour / obey his mother?

(c) When Jesus' family went looking for him, how he responded was scandalous. Loyalty to the family was the local and specific outworking of loyalty to Israel as the people of God. But as Mark has already shown us Jesus was quite capable of challenging the symbols that lay at the heart of the Jewish sense of identity

What does Jesus teach here about family?

Is he a defender of traditional family values?

(d) If we learn to see ourselves as part of God's family, rather than merely his slaves or subjects, how might that transform our attitude towards his commandments?