

1. My title for this lesson is just the word "Names". This chapter has a handful of stories and that word "names" is the one thing all these stories have in common. It is probably best if I briefly explain each of the stories in this chapter and then come back to the title and explain its meaning.
 - a) The first story concerns two groups of people who can't stand each other. They unite in their opposition to Jesus and together plot how they can kill Jesus. In this story, Jesus heals a man of a bad hand (a great "small" miracle). These enemies of Jesus didn't like the fact that Jesus was working notable and visible miracles.
 - i) One group who hated Jesus was mad that He was "working" on the Sabbath. The other group feared Jesus trying to overthrow the Roman government. The fact that both groups were wrong about Jesus intentions did not get them to change their views. It only united two enemies in their hatred of Jesus.
 - ii) A related moral of this story is Christians have to be aware that our commitment to Christ will also cause the "opposition" to focus upon us. If we are living to make a difference for Christ, I can promise that you will have spiritual and "real" factions that oppose our work. This doesn't mean we have to kill those who oppose Jesus before they kill us. It means we have to aware that resistance exists.
 - b) The next story is about Jesus naming His 12 disciples. My question is, "Why did Jesus name his disciples here and now? Why not name them in the beginning when Jesus is starting His ministry? What is the significance of naming them in the first place?"
 - i) We will read that these Jesus named the 12 after praying to God about it. I wondered why didn't Jesus just ask God the Father, "Who shall I pick?" and get an answer. Why was a lot of prayer necessary to name these 12? I'm not positive of the answer, but I do know that after Jesus died, those 12 apostles considered to preach Jesus until their death. All of them (except Judas of course) stood by their story of who Jesus was even to the point of torture and their own death.
 - ii) The point is that if God went to that much trouble to pick out these 12, how much "trouble" do you think Jesus went through to pick us out. More importantly, what are we doing with the fact God picked us to make a difference for Him?
 - c) The story following the naming the of the disciples is about Jesus being accused of being in "cahoots" with the devil. Jesus denies that charge by saying in effect, "I am casting out demons. If I am working with Satan, how can I then work to eliminate demons? That leads me back to my title of "names". Jesus is being accused of the "false name" of working with Satan Himself. Jesus denies the charge by showing the illogic of it.
 - i) So how is this important to us? For starters, it teaches us how to respond to the claim that maybe Jesus was working with Satan.
 - ii) More importantly, if we are living our lives doing good things for God and people wonder how we have the power to do such good things, we need to know how to respond if people accuse us of having demonic powers.
 - d) The final story of the chapter is about Jesus' relatives (probably his half-brothers) wondering what is going on with Him. At this point in the life of Jesus, his half-brothers did not believe He was the Messiah. Jesus gets accused of the false charge of "being out of His mind". Jesus responds to this charge by saying in effect, "I know what I am doing and my real family is those that believe what I am doing is true."
 - i) Jesus is not denying his physical relationship to his relatives. He is simply teaching that He is forming a new relationship with those that follow Him.

2. OK, back to the topic of names. To summarize the whole chapter, we have groups in effect, calling Jesus a bunch of false names by bringing false charges against Him. At essentially the same time, Jesus is naming those who are following Him. Let's say you and I believe that Jesus is God and don't believe these false charges. What are we to do with these "Names"?
 - a) The answer is to remember that Jesus said in effect, "The world (of nonbelievers) hated Me and therefore they will hate you". (See John 15:18.) The effect of that statement is we need to study how Jesus handled his false accusers, because if we are following Jesus, we too, need to know how to deal with false accusations.
 - b) Just as Jesus prayed over the 12 disciples, I believe that Jesus works the same way in our lives as well. If we as believers have been called to follow Him, then God is working in our lives to give us the strength and courage to face our false-accusers and help us in our loyalty to God despite the false accusations we may face in life.
 - c) What should be studied in this chapter is how Jesus reacted to these false charges and how He rose above them. Jesus didn't kill all of those who didn't believe in Him. Jesus simply responded as to how those charges were false and then went about His business.
 - i) That's the lesson for us. God does not call on us to wipe out those who disagree with our views about Jesus. He does call on us to be a good witness for Him. God calls on us to use our lives to make a difference for Him. How we do that is a separate answer for each believer. We each need to pray to God how He wants to use us to make a difference for Him.
 - ii) At the same time, we need to know how to face people who call us "names" and make false statements about Jesus to us, as they disagree with our views. Jesus teaches us how to deal with such false accusers and at the same time, still be a witness to them in hopes it will change their hearts.
 - iii) Nobody has ever said that being a witness for Jesus is easy. That is why we pray regularly for God's protection and guidance through our lives. That is why we pray for His strength to help us through each situation as it comes. Living the Christian life without God's help is impossible. Living for God through His power is what God calls us to do and what we can do if we stick close to God through prayer, through time with other Christians and through His word.
 - d) OK, with that convicting introduction out of my system, ☺ we can begin the text.
3. Chapter 3, Verse 1: Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there.
 - a) Chapter 3 begins with another miracle story. The story is about Jesus healing a man with a shriveled hand at a synagogue during or after the normal Jewish church service. Mark tells this story not so much to tell how Jesus healed someone, but to show the growing opposition to Jesus at this point.
 - b) Here in Verse 1, Jesus went to a synagogue service along with the man with a bad hand.
 - c) Before I get into the story of this miracle, a little background is helpful here:
 - i) First, a few words about synagogues. The formation of local synagogues was adopted after the Jews came back from the Babylonian captivity. A synagogue is the formation of ten or more Jewish men at one location. A synagogue can also refer to a building. It is the Jewish equivalent of saying a "church", as a church can refer to a building or the people who meet in that building.
 - ii) The next background point is about a "shriveled hand". This could be anything from psoriasis to some sort of physical deformity of the hand. The point is, a man with the shriveled hand could not stretch it out the way a normal person could.
 - a) I'm sure the man's bad hand caused a lot of pain and he appreciated Jesus' healing him of the pain associated with the bad hand.

4. Verse 2: Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."
- a) By this point in Jesus ministry, Jesus was not only gaining followers, but He was also gaining enemies who didn't like what He was preaching. Jesus' enemies were looking for a reason to accuse Him of being disobedient to God or to the local government. By the end of this little story we read of two groups who essentially hate each other, join forces to try to eliminate Jesus.
 - b) It's time for a little more background on the Pharisee's. Not everybody in Israel was a Pharisee. This was a "sect" in Israel who took a very literal view of God's laws. This group had their own set of rules on how to properly interpret God's laws. Among their rules is that one should not work to make a person better on the Sabbath day, which is the day they get together to worship God. For example, if someone is bleeding, it is ok to bandage the wound to stop the bleeding, but one cannot apply any form of medicine to make it better. As strange as that sounds, that was their belief.
 - i) Given that belief that it is wrong to make a person better on the Sabbath, the Pharisee's were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath.
 - c) That leads us to Verse 3. Jesus told the man with the shriveled hand to stand up in front of everyone. Jesus is going to challenge the Pharisees on this specific point and use this man with the bad hand as an example to compare the Pharisee's views with Jesus' view.
 - i) What is interesting to me, is that if you had to rate each of Jesus miracles in the order of "most impressive to least impressive", this one might be on the bottom of the list. Let's face it, Jesus has cured people dying from leprosy. Here was a man who's hand is shriveled up. Yes that is a bad thing, but the Pharisee's were saying in effect that Jesus could fix something "like this" anytime He wanted to.
5. Verse 4: Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.
- a) Jesus understood the Pharisee's bad interpretation of healing on the Sabbath was wrong. Jesus makes the point that the most important thing is to do "good" on the Sabbath. If one had the power to heal, wouldn't it be evil to not use that power?
 - i) Remember that the injured person suffered from a bad hand. As painful as that might be, it was not a life threaten injury. Jesus took this situation "up a level" by asking is it ok to save a life or kill on the Sabbath?
 - ii) The Pharisees remained silent on Jesus' questioning their views. To me, that is the same as the Pharisees saying "Jesus is right" but they didn't want to admit it. In other words, they couldn't argue with Jesus' point about healing.
 - iii) A few years back, I had a conversation with a religious Jewish friend about this issue. He told me that Orthodox Judaism (which is the most conservative of the modern views of Judaism) teach that if somebody is sick or injured, it is essential to get help even it is on a Sabbath. My point is the Jewish religion today does not share the views of the Pharisee's of Jesus day on this issue.
 - b) The bigger picture idea is the danger of getting caught up in our own church traditions and putting those traditions on higher ground (or the same ground) of God's word. I have found we are experts on finding faults in other denominations, but tend to turn a blind eye own church traditions.
 - i) Over the years, I've become less rigid on debatable issues. To me, there is the essential gospel issues of which there is no compromise. On debatable issues, I've learned to "let it go" and not argue over debatable issues. Jesus couldn't change people who disagreed with their views and I don't have the power to change people who disagree with my views. If God wants to change them or me, it is up to Him and not me to deal with people and those issues.

- c) I can't leave this topic without sharing one of my favorite Christian cartoons: It shows two men both coming out of different churches staring at each other. One is in a coat and tie with a bible under his arm. The other is in shorts and a t-shirt and he too, has a bible under his arm. Both men look at each other and think, "There but by the grace of God, go I". The point of that joke is both men are looking down at the way the other is dressed and if it weren't for the "Grace of God", they would be at "fault" and be like the other man.
 - i) Of course the point of that joke is again, to not be caught up in one's church traditions when judging other people.
 - d) Meanwhile, Jesus and some Pharisee's are still in a standoff over the issue of whether or not it is a good thing to heal someone on the Sabbath.
6. Verse 5: He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.
- a) I want you to notice Jesus attitude prior to healing the man with the bad hand. Verse 5 says Jesus was both angry and deeply distressed at His critics.
 - i) The bible teaches that God is angry at sin, but at the same time, God wants the sinning person to turn from that sin. That is how Jesus could be angry and feel distress at the same time.
 - ii) Despite Jesus anger, He didn't turn those Pharisee's into a pile of salt or something of that nature. ☺ Jesus wants people to turn from their sin, but at the same time, God gets angry over the results caused by sin.
 - b) A moment later, Jesus turns to the man with the bad hand and Jesus tells that man to stretch out his hand, and in an instant, the hand was perfectly healed.
 - i) My point here is that despite Jesus anger over the Pharisees, it didn't stop Jesus from performing this miracle.
 - ii) Notice Jesus didn't have to be in a "good mood" in order to heal someone. Jesus was still both angry and feeling sorrow over the Pharisee's attitude. At the same time, Jesus did this healing despite His displeasure with His critics.
 - iii) My point is someone can think, "God cannot help me right now, because He is too angry over my situation." Here in one verse one can see God's ability to heal and at the same time be angry over sin and at the same time show sorrow over the damage that can be done by sin. Never fail to pray over a situation because one thinks God is angry or "whatever" over a related situation.
 - c) Let me discuss the issue of "church traditions" from another perspective: If you feel God is calling you to do something that is biblical, but one cannot do that "thing" because it is against the tradition of one's particular church, then it may be time to change churches.
 - i) I've known people go from "anti-miracle" churches to "pro-miracle" churches and vice-versa because one has, or doesn't believe in supernatural healings. I've seen people change churches due to the dress ware requirements or lack of dress ware requirements over a particular church. I've known Christians who have been divorced because their spouse was unfaithful and the now divorced (but faithful) spouse was not welcome at a church.
 - ii) My point here is that it is ok to hold a particular view on some church "controversy", but to not think any more or less of another Christian just because their view is different than ours. That is the underlying message.
 - iii) So, is it ok to have different Christian churches with different views on "biblical matters"? Of course it is. God knew there would be divisions over such issues, which is why we have lots of different good Christian churches with different views on things. At the same time, we shouldn't look down on those who agree with us on debatable issues, but agree with us on the Christian fundamentals.
 - d) Meanwhile, there is still one more verse to this story.

7. Verse 6: Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.
- a) Let me quickly discuss both groups mentioned here: The Pharisees were very devout Jewish believers with their own set of interpretations of God's laws. The Herodians were non-religious or "lightly" religious Jews who were supportive of the Roman government and the fact that King Herod was appointed the leader over this territory.
 - i) My point here is that these two groups were at odds with each other. Even a non-Jewish person reading this at that time would know who Herod was and would get the idea that these two groups were at odds.
 - b) This verse reminds me of the old political expression that "politics makes for odd bedfellows". What that expression means is that two groups who normally would have nothing in common can and do join forces for a common cause.
 - i) The Pharisee's wanted independent rule for the Jewish people. The Herodians accepted the idea of Roman rule. The point is these two groups didn't like each other, but they were united in their attempt to kill Jesus.
 - c) OK, let's get to the why question: The Pharisee's didn't like Jesus because He put down their particular interpretation of God's laws. Instead of the Pharisee's thinking they might be wrong, they were more concerned with how they could eliminate (kill) Jesus.
 - i) As to the Herodians, their fear is that Jesus was getting too popular, and that He would lead a rebellion against the Roman government.
 - d) The point is? It is to be aware that Jesus causes division among people, but it also cause those who normally hate each other to be united in their opposition to what Christians teach and practice. We aren't called to kill our enemies, but just be aware of them.
 - e) Another point is that some people won't change now matter how good is the evidence.
8. Verse 7: Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed.⁸ When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.⁹ Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him.¹⁰ For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.
- a) The action in Verse 7 continues on the same day as the healing of the man with the bad hand. Jesus and his followers (the 12 disciples were not named yet) went out by a lake (i.e., the Sea of Galilee). A point made in Verse 7 is that Jesus' popularity was not limited to those living near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had followers from all over the greater area.
 - b) A quick geography lesson would be helpful here: The lake known as the Sea of Galilee is in the northern area of Israel. Judea is in the south and Jerusalem is in Judea. The area of Idumea is east of Israel. The cities of Tyre and Sidon are north of Israel and exist in what-is-today Lebanon. The point is Jesus was getting popular and had followers from all over.
 - c) Because Jesus has healed so many people, one can imagine the large crowd trying to touch Him to get some sort of healing. I suspect a large portion of the crowd just wanted to follow Jesus to see what He was going to do next. I believe the vast majority of the crowd had no interest in "Jesus the suffering Messiah", but just wanted to see miracles or they wanted to see if Jesus was going to lead a revolt against Rome.
 - d) Because of the crowd, Jesus asked a few disciples to prepare a boat for Him so that he could preach on the water for everyone to hear.
 - i) Mark's gospel spends little, if any time explaining what Jesus actually said. This gospel only mentions the crowds and the fact that Jesus had to get on a boat in order to teach the people.
 - ii) Personally, I could just see this crowd thinking, "OK, Jesus enough philosophy, do another miracle!" I personally suspect much of this crowd left as they were only interested in healings and miracles and didn't want to hear Jesus message of repentance and believing the good news of the Gospel.

- e) OK, other than the fact that the crowd eventually rejected Jesus, what am I to learn from this section? It is a reminder that some people will refuse to believe the Gospel message. No matter how fantastic the miracles, as they don't want to change their lifestyles.
 - i) Most people are more than happy to see and experience "God the miracle worker". The problem is the same group doesn't want to hear from the God who tells us to change our lifestyle. Even though Jesus is drawing a large crowd, I believe that most are not interested in the true message that is being preached.
- 9. Verse 11: Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹² But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.
 - a) Before we get into the next section of this story, we have another mention (like the one in Chapter 2) of demons being cast out of people. The demons know who Jesus is, and Jesus gives the demons the orders not to tell anyone. Because Jesus is God, the demons must obey Jesus and leave the human bodies they are occupying.
 - b) This leads to a question about demonic healing: If demons are not allowed to mention who Jesus is, (The Son of God), why mention their speaking in the first place?
 - i) Part of the answer is Peter was there. (Peter was Mark's source for the gospel.) Peter remembered the demons crying out at this point and remembered Jesus silencing the demons who wanted to speak out.
 - ii) The second answer is that Jesus didn't want to accept the testimony of a creature that is capable of lying. He wants people to figure that out on their own that Jesus is both God and the Son of God so they can be eternally forgiven of their sins.
 - iii) The point is the text just states that Jesus silenced the demons and the "why" is not given at this point. The text does teach that Jesus has greater power than demons and that is something the "Roman world" could understand and relate to.
 - c) There is "a" view among bible scholars about demons and how they differ from angels. Whenever you read of angels in the bible, they either look like people or they look like creatures who have wings. My point is angels have some sort of physical body.
 - i) When you read of demons, Jesus is always casting them out of people. The view is that demons don't have physical bodies and that's why they like to occupy human bodies. Prayer in Jesus' name is required to cast demons out of bodies. That idea of praying through Jesus to remove demons is based on the idea that Jesus gave the disciples (and supposedly all believers) the power to heal people of demons. That possibility is brought up more, later in this chapter.
 - ii) For those who have seen the movie, "The Exorcist", the book and the movie were based on an actual story of an exorcism. In real life, the boy who had the demon (the movie changed it from a boy to a girl) was cured and no humans died in the curing process. (In the movie a priest was killed in the process). My point is the movie had some reality to it, about an actual demon possession, but the story was changed to make it more "Hollywoodish".
 - iii) My point is the evidence I have read in the bible and also from outside sources is that demons do exist and like to live inside human bodies. With prayer and the help of God, such forces can be overcome and leave the human body. As I stated in the last lesson, I don't believe a Christian can be demon possessed. One cannot have the Spirit of God and a demon inside of you.
 - d) Getting back to the verse, Jesus was also dealing with demons being located within this crowd. So why were demons so close to Jesus? You would think they would go in the opposite direction of wherever Jesus was: The answer is that demons want to be where they can "do the most damage". Therefore, they were hanging around Jesus to get people to say or think, "Don't believe this man" and get people to turn away.
 - i) OK, enough "demonology". ☺ Let's move on to the next set of verses:

10. Verse 13: Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.¹⁴ He appointed twelve--designating them apostles--that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons.¹⁶ These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);¹⁷ James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder);¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.
- a) In these verses, we get the twelve apostles named by name. In other words, prior to these verses, there were no "official" apostles, just a bunch of people who followed Jesus.
 - b) If you read this story in Luke's gospel, it mentions the fact that Jesus was all night in prayer over these disciples (See Luke 6:12). My first question, is "Why so much prayer over these guys?" After all, Jesus just could have asked God the Father to name the "12" and God the Father could have called out the names. I believe the all night prayer was not about just getting the 12 names right. It was about praying over each person that each would understand Jesus' purpose, each would have the strength to keep on believing in Jesus despite the rejection of the cross and that each would live out all of their lives to make a difference for God.
 - i) OK John, so Jesus prayed hard for the 12 disciples. What's that got to do with me? The answer is if Jesus worked that hard on the "12", what makes you think that God works any less hard on the lives of you and me as His followers? God wants our lives to make a difference for Him and wants us to have the courage to follow Him and make a difference for Him despite the circumstances of our lives.
 - c) The text also says in Verse 14 that Jesus appointed these 12 to "go out and preach" and have authorities over the demons. As to "preaching", we don't know the history of every apostle, but we do know that most of them went out and continued to preach the gospel until their lives were over. All of the disciples (that we know of) died a violent death and would not deny Jesus even at the point of their death.
 - i) As to "casting out demons", I believe that is a power given not only to the apostles, but to all followers of Jesus. The idea is in effect if we are trusting in Jesus, we have greater power than whatever "Satan can muster up" against us. Does that mean that every Christian has the power to cast out demons? I believe it to be so, although it is difficult to prove. The bible does teach that every Christian has spiritual gifts (See 1st Corinthians 12:4) and I suspect some have special gifts of fighting spiritual warfare more than others. The point of spiritual gifts is that they are to be used to help "build up the body of Christ" which means they are used to both bring in new Christians as well as to help other Christians grow closer in their walk with God.
 - ii) So why did Jesus give the apostles (all 12 of them, including Judas) the gift of casting out demons? I believe it is to show that God can and does give His followers the power to overcome any spiritual force that resists us.
 - d) Going back to the names of the 12 apostles, notice that Jesus does some renaming in these verses. This is the first time that Simon is referred to as Peter.
 - i) James and John are known as the "Sons of Thunder". What scholars suspect that means is it refers to the outspokenness of those two.
 - ii) The text also mentions "Simon the Zealot". In the King James Version it says "Simon the Canaanite". The word translated "Canaanite" means "rebel" in Aramaic. (In case you didn't know, Aramaic is the language Jesus spoke.) What I find interesting is a zealot for Israel is in the same group of disciples as Matthew, the former tax collector. It shows how people from all sorts of backgrounds can get together in peace once they are united under Jesus.

- iii) The last disciple mentioned is Judas, who betrayed Jesus. The classic question is why did Jesus pick someone who would betray Him? Did Jesus know He was going to betray Him? The quick answer is that God draws lots of people to Himself, but it also up to us to choose to follow God. God gives all of us free will and that includes the free will to reject God at any time, as Judas did.
 - iv) If Jesus never picked Judas, people would suspect that God only calls those who are saved. With Judas as a disciple, we can understand the idea that many are called by God, but not everyone who is called accepts that invitation.
 - a) Most scholars speculate that Judas wanted Jesus to overthrow Rome and when Judas found out about the "cross", that is when he planned out the betrayal. Jesus "speeded up" Judas betrayal and caused it to take place on the evening that Jesus wanted it to happen. In other words, Jesus was always in control of His own destiny.
 - e) OK, one last question here: Why list the "12" here? The story prior to the listing of the disciples was about Jesus casting out demons. The next story in Chapter 3 is about religious leaders accusing Jesus of being in "cahoots" with Satan Himself. (Yes, I like saying "cahoots". ☺)
 - i) One reason the disciples are named here is to show that despite the large crowds trying to touch Jesus and despite the negative accusations that Jesus faced, Jesus wants to show that He still takes time out for those who choose to follow Him. As I stated, Jesus prayed all night before specially calling out the "12".
 - ii) Let me put it another way: Is God busy at this moment performing miracles somewhere in the world? I would say so. Is God listening in on all the false accusations people are saying about Jesus at any given moment? Of course God hears all. Despite those situations, does God still take the time to call out and work with those who are His followers? Yes He does. The point is God is not so busy doing other things that He doesn't also care about our issues and our lives.
 - iii) Time for a tough question: How does God do all of this at once? The short answer is to understand that "If you believe God can't handle all of these situations at the same time, then your concept of God is too small!" Next, understand that if God is outside of time as we know it, then in effect "God has all the time in the world" to deal with many situations "all at once" from our time perspective.
 - iv) Getting back to the story, if we can trust that Jesus took the time to pray all night for His disciples despite all the other stuff going on, then we can trust that God takes the time to listen to our prayers and work in our lives despite all the other problems going on around us.
 - v) Another way of looking at this is to ask, "If God does take the time to listen to our prayers and does want to work in our lives, then what are we doing about it?" In other words, we all need to ask, how are we living for God since He does care about our lives and wants to use our lives to make a difference for Him?
 - a) OK, with these convicting questions asked, ☺ let's get back to the text.
11. Verse 20: Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.
- a) In Verse 20, we begin another story. This story begins with the point that Jesus is so popular that He and His disciples can't even sit down to a meal together because so many people are constantly trying to touch Jesus and ask for something from Him.
 - b) Once again, we have the negative side of popularity. Living in Southern California, I have met a few famous people. I can tell you that popularity is not all that it is cracked up to be. The few that I know can't even go out in public because they can't eat a meal in peace. I'm sure it is nice to feel appreciated but it does become a problem in that one never gets any peace. It shows that Jesus can relate to the popular as well as the unpopular!

12. Verse 21: When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."
- a) Here we have Mark's first reference to Jesus family through Mary his mother. Joseph and Mary went on to have a full family after Jesus was born. In Chapter 6 there is a reference to Jesus' brothers and sisters. (See Mark 6:3). Mark says in Chapter 6 that Jesus had four half-brothers and two-half sisters from Mary. At this point in Jesus ministry, Jesus brothers did not believe in Him as the Promised Messiah (See John 7:5.)
 - b) It's time to apply that old saying that "blood is thicker than water". Jesus' brothers knew that they had a family responsibility to take care of Jesus if He is "out of his mind" like the family members complained about here. Therefore, this verse says Jesus' family wanted to take Him back to the family house and watch over Him as "He is out of His mind".
 - i) Of course Jesus was not out of His mind. That is just what Jesus' family (probably his half-brothers) thought when He went around preaching that He is the Son of God and that people should repent and believe the Gospel.
 - ii) Let me personalize this for a moment. Most of us who are devout Christians have close relatives who don't believe the Gospel message. They are still our relatives, but they think that we as have gone way overboard in our following of Jesus. They put up with us as they have figured out we won't change. At the same time, we can preach Jesus to them until we are "blue in the face" and it won't affect them at all. The point is like Jesus, we have to accept the fact that it is God who draws people to accept Jesus no matter how hard we try.
 - iii) I look at it this way, "If Jesus couldn't convince his own brothers that He was the Promised Messiah, what makes me think I can convince my close relatives of something that Jesus Himself couldn't do?". Do I pray for my relatives? Daily. Do I preach to them? Not really. There are times I reach out to them, but I also realize that God has to do the reaching and not me.
 - c) The story of Jesus encounter with members of his own family is now "put on hold" for about ten verses and it comes back again in Verse 31. At this point, we interrupt the story of Jesus dealing with his relatives to deal with the story of Jewish teachers accusing Jesus of working hand-in-hand with Satan himself.
13. Verse 22: And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."
- a) We switch scenes here, but not topics. Remember that Jesus' relatives in the previous verse say that Jesus must be out of His mind. That is in effect, what the Jewish teachers in this verse say here, which is why the stories are connected.
 - b) Let me explain the term "Beelzebub". To make is brief, this is a nickname for Satan at that time. What that word "Beelzebub" actually means a little more complicated than that, but the basic idea is that Beelzebub refers to Satan.
 - c) The accusation Jesus is facing here from some Jewish religious teachers is that the reason Jesus has the power to cast out demons is because the leader of the demons (Satan) possesses Jesus. Obviously That is the false accusation being made here.
 - d) Now comes Jesus response to this charge:
14. Verse 23: So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.
- a) The way Jesus responds to this charge is to say in effect, "If I was working with Satan to cast out demons, then I would be working against Him as well to cast them out. In other words, I can't be working by the power of Satan to cast out demons because if that were true I would be working against "my own team".

- b) Demonic forces in essence are spiritual creatures that refuse to acknowledge God as being in charge of their lives. Demonic creatures understand that "God is God", but they don't want to be obedient to God. Satan himself wants to be worshipped as a leader of a movement to get people to follow their own free will and not the will of God the Father. Demonic creatures joined in this rebellion and acknowledge Satan as their leader.
 - i) This concept that demons "work" for Satan was commonly understood in that culture. Therefore, if Jesus was casting demons out of people, He can't be working for Satan as it is Satan's goal to have demonic creatures embody as many people as possible and get those people to turn away from God.
 - ii) The point of this speech by Jesus is to have the Jewish religious leaders think about their charge that Jesus is in "cahoots" (there is that word again ☺) with the Satan and the logical conclusion of that charge.
 - iii) What is implied but not stated, is that even though the religious leaders could not make the charge stick, it still did not get them to change their view about Jesus.
- 15. Verse 27: In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. ²⁸ I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. ²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." ³⁰ He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."
 - a) The key to reading Verse 27, is to remember that it comes right after Verse 26. In Verse 26 (and beforehand), the topic was Satan and demonic forces. Here in Verse 28, it says that a robber cannot rob the house of a strong man unless that robber first ties up that strong man. The point as it relates to Satan is that Jesus could not cast out demons unless He is stronger than Satan and that Jesus has the power to "bind up" Satan's forces.
 - i) To put it another way, if Jesus did not have the power of God then the demons would never come out of people but just "laugh" at the request to come out of whoever they are embodying at the moment.
 - b) Let me pause for a quick moment and talk about modern Christian encounters with demonic forces. We can't tell by looking at people whether or not they are embodied with a demonic spirit. The good news is they can't embody a believer (although they can "hassle" us, which is a separate issue). The other good news is we as Christians have the power to pray to God to have those demonic spirits leave at any time.
 - i) I know of a Christian who has visited mental institutions. When a "crazy" person walks up to that Christian, they pray for that "crazy person" in Jesus name, for the demonic creature to leave that person. The Christian then says that five minutes later, the crazy person will walk back to them and say "Thank you, I feel better". Am I saying that demonic possession is the case in every crazy person? Of course not. I'm just saying we have to consider the possibility and pray over that person when we encounter that type of situation.
 - ii) The more I grow as a Christian, the more sensitive I have become to this issue. I suspect that Jesus just "knew" when a demonic being embodied someone. I also suspect that when God wants us to pray for a demonic being to leave someone, it will be oblivious when we have to pray. Still, we are never to assume beyond a doubt that is the issue nor are we ever to assume it is not true. We should as Christians only assume it as a possibility and act accordingly.
 - c) Meanwhile, Jesus is still arguing with some religious leaders over whether or not He is in "cahoots" with Satan in order to cast out demons. (OK, I'll stop using that word now. ☺)
 - i) In Verses 28 and 29, we get the famous saying in effect, that all sins are forgivable except the sin of "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit". Let me explain that one.
 - ii) The general idea of that sin is to believe that Jesus is not God. To say that Jesus is controlled by Satan is a "form" of that sin.

- iii) The important idea to learn about this sin is that if one spends a lifetime denying that Jesus is God and denying that Jesus is the only way to heaven, then one is guilty of committing that sin of "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit".
 - iv) Let me tell you what this sin is not: It is not a bunch of magic words so that if you say those words, you are going to hell. Fairly recently, there have been a series of videos made on "You Tube" where a nonbeliever challenges people to say in effect, "Jesus is accursed" in order to say that person will now never be saved.
 - a) The reality is, it doesn't matter what one says at that moment. The true concept of "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" is about a lifetime denial of Jesus as the Son of God and Jesus as God.
 - v) Think of it this way: Why is murder forgivable and blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not forgivable? If we murder someone in this lifetime, we still have to pay the price to society for that action. However to sin is to offend God. Therefore, it is up to God and not us to forgive us of any sin if we truly confess it as sin.
 - vi) It makes sense that the only unforgivable sin is to deny who Jesus is. To spend a lifetime denying Jesus as God is in effect denying Christianity. Therefore, it makes sense that this is the only unforgivable sin. All other sins, as bad as they are in our mind, are forgivable as God is the one who chooses to forgive and not us.
16. Verse 31: Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."
- a) Before I discuss these two verses, I want us to see the previous story of Jesus being accused of being demon possessed in relation to this story of Jesus' family calling to Him. Jesus' half-brothers are saying in effect, "Jesus is out of His mind". The Jewish leaders are saying Jesus is possessed by Satan Himself. In both cases, we read of the denial of Jesus as God. One group just says in effect, "Jesus is crazy" and the other group is saying in effect that Jesus is working with the devil.
 - b) The real point is Jesus is teaching in effect "I am who I am, and the miracles validate that I am truly the son of God". In other words, there are four possibilities about Jesus and the miracles He is performing: Possibility #1: Jesus is out of His mind. Possibility #2: Jesus is being controlled by demonic forces and Possibility #3: Jesus is who He claims He is. Possibility #4 is the disciples are making this stuff up about Jesus.
 - c) When our friends tell us we have "gone over the deep end" on this Jesus stuff, we can say that Jesus Himself dealt with the same set of charges. We should ask, "Well, do you (the person questioning us) believe who Jesus says that He is? If your answer is Yes, what are you doing about it? If your answer is no, you must think that He is either crazy or demon possessed. You then say, I've come to the conclusion that Jesus is God, and I'm doing something about it with my life. (That should transfer the guilt to the other party. ☺)
 - d) What about the possibility that the disciples made this up? My answer is that we have historical records that they were all painfully killed for their belief in Jesus. My question is are you or anyone willing to die for something they "know" is a lie? I don't believe so.
17. Verse 33: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. ³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."
- a) It is interesting to think about the fact that Jesus rejected the pleas of His earthly mother and earthly brothers to come to Him. That's a good set of verses to mention when talking to people from a Catholic background. I like to ask Catholics, "Why do you pray to Mary when you can pray to God Himself? Why do you find it necessary to go through Mary?"
 - i) For many Catholics, it never had occurred to them that they could pray directly to God the Father and go "around" Mary so to speak. Sometimes, just teaching what is "right to do" is a matter of getting around one's preconceived notions.

- ii) While I'm in this "neighborhood", do I believe devout Catholics are saved? In many cases, yes. I think that God wants a relationship with people to the point that He is willing to put up with the prayers address to Mary in order to get a relationship.
 - iii) Do I think it is right to pray through Mary? No, but at the same time, among the "big issues of Christianity", that issue doesn't bother me as much as the denial that Jesus is, who He claimed to be. Roman Catholics accept the deity of Jesus and that is the important issue at stake here.
- b) Now, do these verses mean that Jesus can ignore His "earthly" family? Of course not. Jesus is just making the point that His "real" family are those who do "God's will", which include the idea of accepting Jesus as both God and the Son of God and coming in the flesh to pay the price for sins. These verses do not mean that Jesus can ignore the biblical commands of taking care of one's family. They are about teaching about our relationship with God the Father and God the Son.
- i) This leads to a related point. Jesus taught that He is a king. Jesus "kingdom" is not a physical place one can visit. Jesus' kingdom consists of all people who believe that Jesus is God and believe that Jesus is their king. Therefore, Jesus' "brothers and sisters" are those like you and me who consider Jesus their king.
- c) Remember that Mary knew Jesus came to be the promised Messiah. Yet, it appears Mary was among those wanting Jesus to come back to their family house. In effect, this is Mary asking Jesus to do things "her way" as opposed to doing it God's way. The reason many, of our prayers are rejected, is because it is not God's will for the moment to do things the way we want them done. That may have been the case here with Jesus and Mary.
18. OK, time for me to sum all of this up. My theme for this lesson has simple been the word "names". In this lesson, there are a lot of people who don't believe in Jesus making all sorts of false accusations about Jesus and calling Him names Jesus does not deserve like "out of his mind", working with Satan and violating the Sabbath day.
- a) At the same time, this chapter lists the names of those who were called to be Jesus' disciples. The point of this chapter is to ask ourselves, which group are we a part of, those who make false accusations about Jesus and call Him by false names, or those who are called by Jesus and called to be His disciples.
 - b) This leads to my favorite question of, "If we are called, what are we doing about it?"
 - i) I've never been impressed with people who say they believe in Jesus. I've always been impressed with people who do something about the fact they believe in Jesus. That is the underlying point of this lesson. If we consider our names to be among those Jesus has called, then let us prove it, by living to make a difference for Jesus in all that we do in life. Just "how we do that" is an underlying topic of the entire bible. Since I'm at the end of the lesson, I'll stop here and it say in effect, we are to ask God how He wants us to live our lives and then, well, we follow.
 - ii) OK, end of guilt trip and end of this lesson.
19. Let's pray: Father, Help us to draw close to You and stick close to You. Help us to pray for those around us and not try to "fix people" in our own power. Help us to trust in the fact that You are in charge of every aspect of our lives and the lives of those around us. Help us to remember that we are called by You and that it is Your desire that we respond to that calling. Guide us as we live to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.