

After opposition to Jesus has come to a high point, Jesus turns aside for a while to concentrate on the needs of His disciples.

**1. Training successors**

**1. Increasing difficulty in ministry leads Jesus to concentrate on training successors.** Jesus does not have a stationary ministry. He is not like the pastor of a church, or an evangelist starting a congregation in a particular area. His focus is upon the whole nation of Israel. He is starting a nationwide movement of disciples.

• Crowds follow Jesus

Because of the rising opposition against Him, Jesus withdraws from the villages to the sea of Galilee<sup>1</sup>. Great crowds are now following Him from all over the country<sup>2</sup>. He has to speak to them from a boat so that they cannot crush Him<sup>3</sup>. He has healed hundreds of people and crowds of people want their bodies healed even if they want nothing else<sup>4</sup>. Evil spirits are acknowledging Jesus' authority<sup>5</sup> – but Jesus does not want free advertising from them<sup>6</sup>!

1 3:7  
2 3:7-8  
3 3:9  
4 3:10  
5 3:11  
6 3:12

• The whole nation must hear

The time has come for Jesus to appoint the apostles who will extend His ministry throughout the nation. Jesus has a large vision. He is not simply focusing on a little congregation; He is intent upon getting a whole nation to hear about God's kingdom.

• Twelve apostles

So the vast crowds now following Jesus introduce a new stage into Jesus' ministry. He goes into the hills and calls some of His supporters to be with Him<sup>1</sup>. He chooses twelve of them and gives them a special name, 'apostles'. Probably he used the Hebrew word *shaliach* which means 'apostle', or 'person specially sent'.

1 3:13

**2. Jesus' Training Programme**

**2. Jesus has a programme of training in mind for them.** At first they must spend time with Him<sup>1</sup>. This will enable them to see Jesus at work and know how He does things. The apostles are to be extensions of the ministry of Jesus. They will do what He has been doing.

• Training  
• Learning his teaching and methods

After they have got some practical experience seeing how Jesus does things, and learning His teaching and His methods, then He will send them out to be an extension of His ministry<sup>1</sup>. Mark tells us the names of the people concerned<sup>2</sup>.

1 3:14

1 3:14-15  
2 3:16-19

**3. A New kind of family**

**3. Jesus is actually bringing into being a new kind of family.** His earthly family at this point think He is insane<sup>1</sup>. People that one might expect to support Jesus, are in fact letting Him down badly. His own family are unable to appreciate Him.

• Demon possessed – say the "teachers of the law"

One might think that learned theologians might be able to appreciate the Son of God standing before their very eyes. But the 'teachers of the law' – the theological experts from Jerusalem – call Him demon-possessed<sup>1</sup>. They say He does His miracles because He is empowered by Beelzebul, that is, by Satan.

1 3:20-21

1 3:22-30

• The results show that God's Spirit is at work

Jesus answers this charge easily. Anything damaging the kingdom of Satan cannot be from Satan himself<sup>1</sup>. It is an important principle and helps us to 'test the spirits'. When Satan's kingdom is attacked and people are turning to righteousness, then it must be the Spirit of God who is at work.

1 3:23-26

• Setting Satan's captives free

What Jesus is actually doing is 'binding' Satan. Jesus is using picture-language. A strong and powerful person has a house in which he keeps many prisoners. Rescuers want to attack the house so as to release the prisoners within it, but the house is like a fortress. It is not so easy to get into it and release the captives. And it is guarded by

its powerful occupant. He is a strong and powerful person.

What do they do? They attack the powerful resident first and overcome him. They tie him up so that he is unable to resist what they are doing. Then they break their way into the house and set free the captives.

It is a parable. Satan is the householder. He has many captives. Jesus is using His authority as God's obedient Son to release prisoners from Satan's domain.

• **The 'strong man' bound**

It is important to note that the release of prisoners can take place only **after** the 'strong man' has been bound. The liberating activity of Jesus takes place because He has **already** defeated Satan. Jesus had been empowered by the Holy Spirit<sup>□1</sup>, and Satan had tried to get Jesus to sin but had failed<sup>□2</sup>. Jesus was able to release captives from Satan because He had already bound him.

□1 1:10  
□2 1:13

• **Unforgivable sin**

Jesus has another word of warning for the scribes from Jerusalem. To deliberately resist Jesus at a time when He is ministering with great power is unforgivable<sup>□1</sup>. It is unforgivable because Jesus is the way of forgiveness! To deliberately reject Jesus is to reject the way of salvation and so be lost forever. It must be noticed in passing that the 'unforgivable sin' is committed only by unbelievers; it is the sin of rejecting Jesus when He is present in great power. No Christian is guilty of the '*blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*'.

□1 3:28–30

• **Jesus new family**

The point of these stories in the flow of the Gospel of Mark is that Jesus is creating a new kind of family. Religious leaders reject Him. His family think He is insane. **So He needs a new family – and He has it in His followers.**

• **Attending to His teaching and doing His will**


The earthly family of Jesus try to call Jesus away from what He is doing. They stand outside, refusing to come in and wanting Him to come out<sup>□1</sup>. But Jesus makes use of the occasion to make the point that those who have 'come in' and are at that very moment attending to His teaching have a closer relationship to Jesus than His earthly family. Relationship to Jesus comes by doing Jesus' will<sup>□1</sup>. His followers are His family.

□1 3:31–32  
□2 3:35

• **Building God's kingdom**

Here is a model of building God's kingdom at a time when it is facing opposition. Proclamation to the world around<sup>□1</sup> is to be accompanied by the building of a fellowship. Jesus' way is to 'bind' Satan by Jesus' own obedience, and also to bring together a family of disciples who are ready to extend His message and His kingdom.

□1 1:21–3:6

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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