

1. **Introduction:** Mark 3:20-35 says that reports of Jesus' ministry came to His family. Some reports had people saying, ***"He is out of his mind."***
 - Jerusalem scribes accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub, prince of demons through whose power He performed miracles.
 - In this passage Mark uses a literary technique to talk about both things that is referred to as a "story sandwich." The Jerusalem scribe's issue is embedded between comments about Jesus' family.
2. **Mark 3:20-21:** ***"Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."***
 - Jesus returned to His base in Capernaum. A crowd quickly gathered. The crowd was so large and pressed so close that Jesus and His disciples could not even eat.
 - When Jesus' family and friends heard various rumors, they were so disturbed they went to find Him and bring Him home.
 - Possibly they were confused by Jesus apparently neglecting regular rest and food, doing things like touching a leper, and hearing things the authorities said as they interpreted His ministry as being deviant.
 - When the family found Him, they sought to bring Him home.
3. **Mark 3:22:** ***"And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebub," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."***
 - Scribes were experts in the Law and in all aspects of Jewish custom and religion. Some were sent from Jerusalem to spy on Jesus.
 - No one denied that the supernatural was involved in Jesus' ministry. It seemed obvious to all who witnessed His actions.
 - The Scribes decided to destroy Jesus' credibility using the undoubtable supernatural involvement as a hook.
 - They accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub and drawing on his power to heal physical afflictions and cast out demons.
 - They thus claimed that Jesus' healing power came from an unclean spirit that possessed Him. Beelzebub was a Philistine deity and another name for Satan.
 - The scribes apparently made their wicked accusations to the crowd not to Jesus, but their accusation came to Jesus' ears.
 - In verses 23-26 Jesus refutes the charges. The scribes do not respond.
4. **Mark 3:23-26:** ***"And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot***

stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.”

- Jesus shows that the charge is ridiculous. If it were true, Satan would be casting out Satan. That makes no sense.
- Jesus gives illustrations showing how silly the charge is. Satan would be supplying the very power that would result in his shameful defeat.
- Having refuted the scribe's accusation before the crowd, Jesus presents the explanation for His victories over demons.

5. **Mark 3:27**: *“But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”*

- Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is the strong man who is plundering Satan's kingdom. He is depriving Satan of the things Satan values as his own. Ultimately, Jesus will completely end Satan's worldly reign.
- Jesus' miracles do not in any way verify Beelzebul's dominion, but instead are a prophecy signaling his certain doom.
- Jesus' final words are an exhortation.

6. **Mark 3:28-30**: *“Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— ³⁰for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”*

- The word translated “truly” is “Amen,” signifying important, solemn truth follows.
- A person who sincerely repents of sins will be forgiven. Blasphemy will be forgiven with one exception.
- Blasphemy refers to “defiant irreverence” or more generally to “insolent language” used against either God or people (Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 6:4).
- Many guilty of defiant irreverence are forgiven. Peter is forgiven and reinstated (Mark 14:71; John 21:15-17). Paul is forgiven (1 Tim 1:12-17) and afterward used effectively in Christian ministry.
- But there is no forgiveness for defiant irreverence against the Holy Spirit,”
- Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the result of increasing toleration of sin grieving the Spirit (Eph 4:30). Unrestrained sin means resisting the Spirit (Acts 7:51). If continued, unrestrained sin quenches the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19).

7. **Mark 3:31-35**: *“And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. ³²And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” ³³And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” ³⁴And looking about at those who sat*

around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

- The size of the crowd made it impossible for the family and friends to get through to Jesus. Someone was sent to call Him.
- They said, *“Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.”* Jesus uses this interruption to teach a valuable lesson beginning with the question, *“Who are my mother and my brothers?”*
- His answer is, *“Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*
- Those who do God’s will have been regenerated (born again). New birth through the Holy Spirit is being born into the family of God.
- All the family of God have been called and are committed to obeying the will of God. In mortal life, their obedience will be imperfect but increasing in perfection as they are transformed through sanctification.
- No one can do the will of God except by the sovereign grace of God.
- Jesus says His family is all who obey the will of God. Physical family members are not necessarily included. At least in the beginning of His ministry, *“even his own brothers did not believe in him”* (John 7:5).

8. **Mark 4:1:** *“Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.”*

- To this point Mark has mentioned “large crowds,” but now this crowd is very large, so large Jesus got into a boat and moved out from the shore a bit, so that He could use the sloping terrain as an amphitheater.
- He sat in the boat and began to speak.

9. **Mark 4:2-9:** *“And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” 9 And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

- In Mark chapter 4, there are 4 parables. Mark records a total of 8 parables. In the Synoptic Gospels there are over 30 parables.
- What is a parable and why does Jesus use that form of teaching?

10. **Parable:** The Greek word is “*parabolee*.” “Para” means beside. “Ballo” means to cast or throw. Thus, parable means to cast beside or place alongside.
- In most parables, Jesus places familiar incidents, objects, persons, or situations alongside some theological or spiritual principle or idea to make the concept clear.
 - Jesus used parables to reveal God’s truth by redirecting thoughts into fresh patterns.
 - A parable is a verbal picture analogous to a cartoon. A cartoon is constructed of a few simple lines sketching a caricature of a situation.
 - It often conveys a striking message difficult to achieve in any other way. Jesus accomplishes that with words in parabolic form. The points He makes are unmistakable, vivid, and important.
 - The paralleling of “unexpected” with “familiar” is a tactic which bumps thoughts out of well-worn paths into new patterns enabling persuasive changes in thinking.
 - Parables make truth concrete, easily remembered, interesting, and personally discoverable. Jesus’ parables often used earthly stories to give meaning to a heavenly truth or to clarify a tricky concept.
 - This parable sets a scene familiar to most of Jesus’ listeners. A “sower” went into a field to sow seeds. He threw seeds with his hand. They fell on different types of soil.
 - It was well-known that Israel had a variety of soil types. Jesus speaks of 4 types, which He uses to represent the conditions of the spiritual heart.
 - The 4 types of soil in the parable are (1.) Packed soil of footpaths. (2.) Rocky soil. (3.) Thorny areas. (4.) Deep rich soil.
 - The spiritual heart analogies are (1.) Hard hearts. (2.) Shallow hearts. (3.) Crowded hearts. (4.) Fruitful hearts.
 - Inevitably, the hand-scattered seed would fall on all types of soil. The results were quite different for the different soils.
11. **Planting:** Rains determined when to plant. There were “early rains” and “late rains.” Early rains came in late fall when the hot summer was over. That was the time to plant.
- The ground was lightly plowed with a wooden plow either before or after the seed was scattered. Seed falling on hard footpaths stayed on top of the soil until eaten by birds or otherwise lost.
 - Early rains enabled seeds to germinate. Late rains were necessary for the crop to mature. During early rains, both air and soil were cool. Most seed did not germinate until it grew warmer.
 - Shallow soil over a limestone base was the exception. The stone retained enough summer heat to germinate seed.
 - Young plants initially thrived. When the early rains ceased and the spring sun became hot, the plants would wither in the shallow soil.

- Briars were dormant at planting time. Seeds falling among the briar roots would germinate and begin to grow before the briars began their new season.
 - But briar roots were permanently well-established and soon they sprouted and rapidly overtook the wheat, choking it out.
 - When good deep soil is warm, seeds rapidly germinate, seedlings grow and are cultivated. After the late rains, the wheat matures, and a good harvest is reaped.
 - All these things were known by the people hearing Jesus. They knew about what happened when a sower scattered seed and it fell onto different kinds of soil. Jesus' story made sense to them.
12. **New Knowledge:** Jesus applies this pattern to the sowing of God's Word. When God's Word is sown, the sower doesn't know, and doesn't need to know, what type of heart soil it will fall on.
- Like the soil of the fields, spiritual heart "soil" varies. There are hard, shallow, crowded, and fruitful hearts.
 - Like repeated walking on a footpath hardens the soil, so repeated unrepented sin makes a human heart hard.
13. **Hard Hearts:** God's Word doesn't penetrate hard hearts. The Word lies on the surface, never sinking in. There is a complete lack of understanding.
- Romans 1:18-20 describes hard-hearted people who suppress the truth about God which can be known from nature.
 - That inevitably leads a person into spiritual ignorance and moral degradation (Romans 1:21-31).
14. **Shallow Hearts:** Listeners with shallow hearts respond positively but temporarily to the Word. Response is primarily emotional and lacks depth. They quickly fall away.
15. **Crowded Hearts:** These are hearts filled with worldly influences which choke spiritual interest. A person living a double life. Church on Sunday, worldly life during the week fits the picture. The gospel message is choked out by worldly interests and bears no fruit.
- Fruitful Hearts: Fruitful hearts exist only through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. A fruitful heart is receptive to God's truth.
 - The whole being – will, intellect, imagination, and emotions – is touched and changed by God's Word.
 - Spiritual growth occurs and fruit is produced. The Word is heard, believed, and obediently acted upon.
16. **The Source of Good Heart Soil:** No one in their natural fallen state has good heart soil. Each person begins life with a "hard" heart that will not accept the gospel.

- Apart from a work of God's grace, no one could ever receive God's Word and produce fruit for God's glory.
 - God's regenerating power can change any heart to a heart receptive to His Word.
 - Regeneration converts the hard soil of a heart to good rich soil ready to receive the gospel seed.
17. **Mark 4: 10-12:** *“And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹²so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand lest they should turn and be forgiven.””*
- We will discuss this interesting comment next lesson along with Jesus' own interpretation of the parable of the soils.