



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



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Part 7

Mark 3:7-19

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REVIEW of Mark 1:1-3:6

Mark 2:1 through 3:6 forms a very clear “subsection” of Mark’s Gospel.

We’ve now seen Jesus healing, exorcising demons, even forgiving sins.

We have also seen escalating conflict over forgiving sins, associating with the wrong people, not fasting, and being perceived as disrespectful of the Sabbath.

All of this has resulted in Jesus’ opponents beginning to plot to kill him.

Beginning in 3:7, there is a clear shift in tone from the controversy narratives that precede it.

The section from 3:7 through 3:12, while advancing the story, also summarizes what Jesus has been doing up to now.

There are no specific stories in this section, only generalities.

Mark 3:7 (NIV)

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed.

“his disciples”

This includes ALL followers of Jesus – soon, we will see some of these followers designated “apostles”, from among the MANY “disciples”.

“to the lake”

We are starting to see that this is a very frequent place for Jesus to visit!

He went there in 1:16 and 2:13 previously.

“large crowd from Galilee followed”

Just as in 1:37; 1:45; and 2:13!

This will continue to be the case going forward!

Mark 3:8 (NIV)

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.

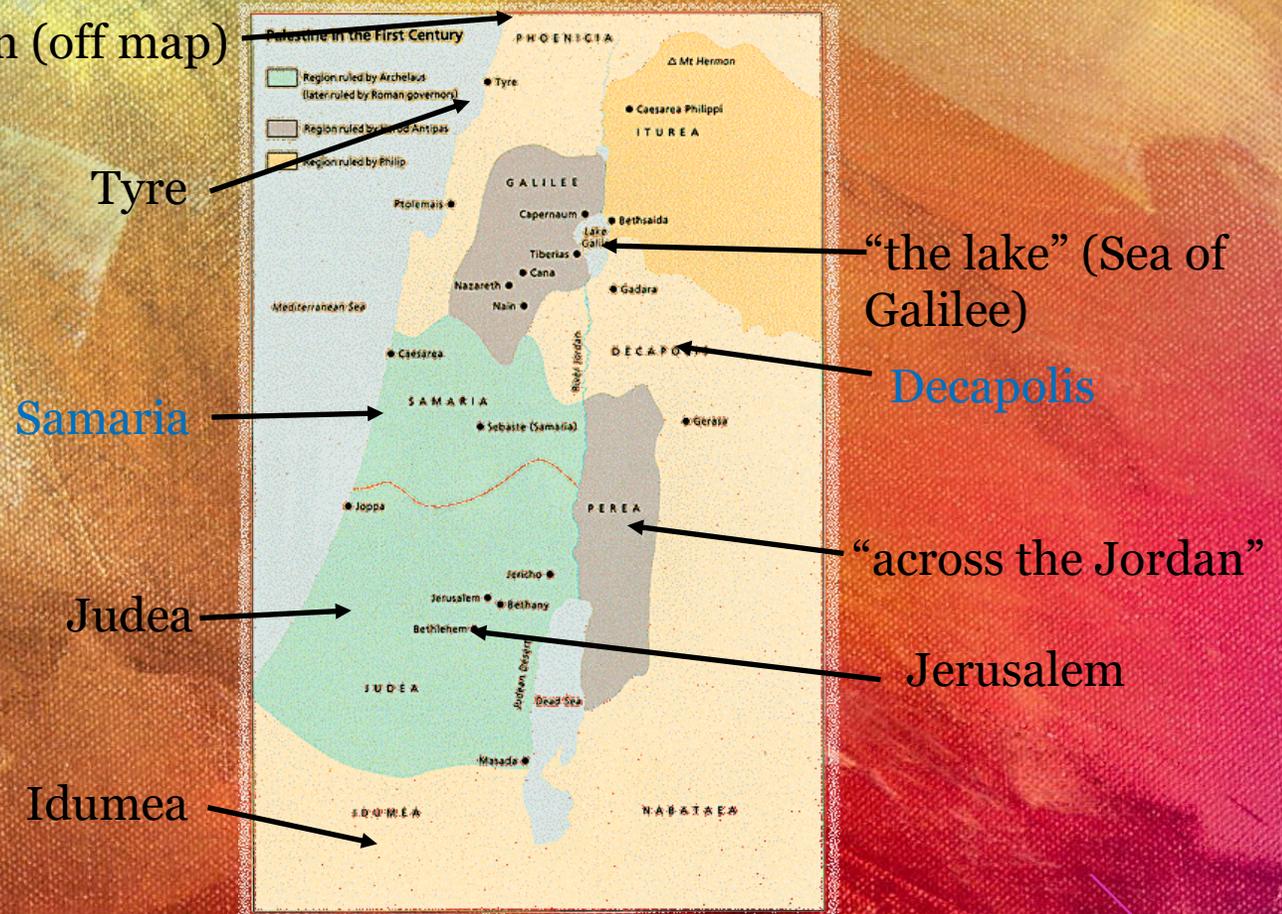
“When they heard”

News is spreading even more widely, by word of mouth.

“from Judea, ...”

Six areas are listed where people came from to see Jesus. Notably missing by name are **Samaria** and the **Decapolis**.

Sidon (off map)



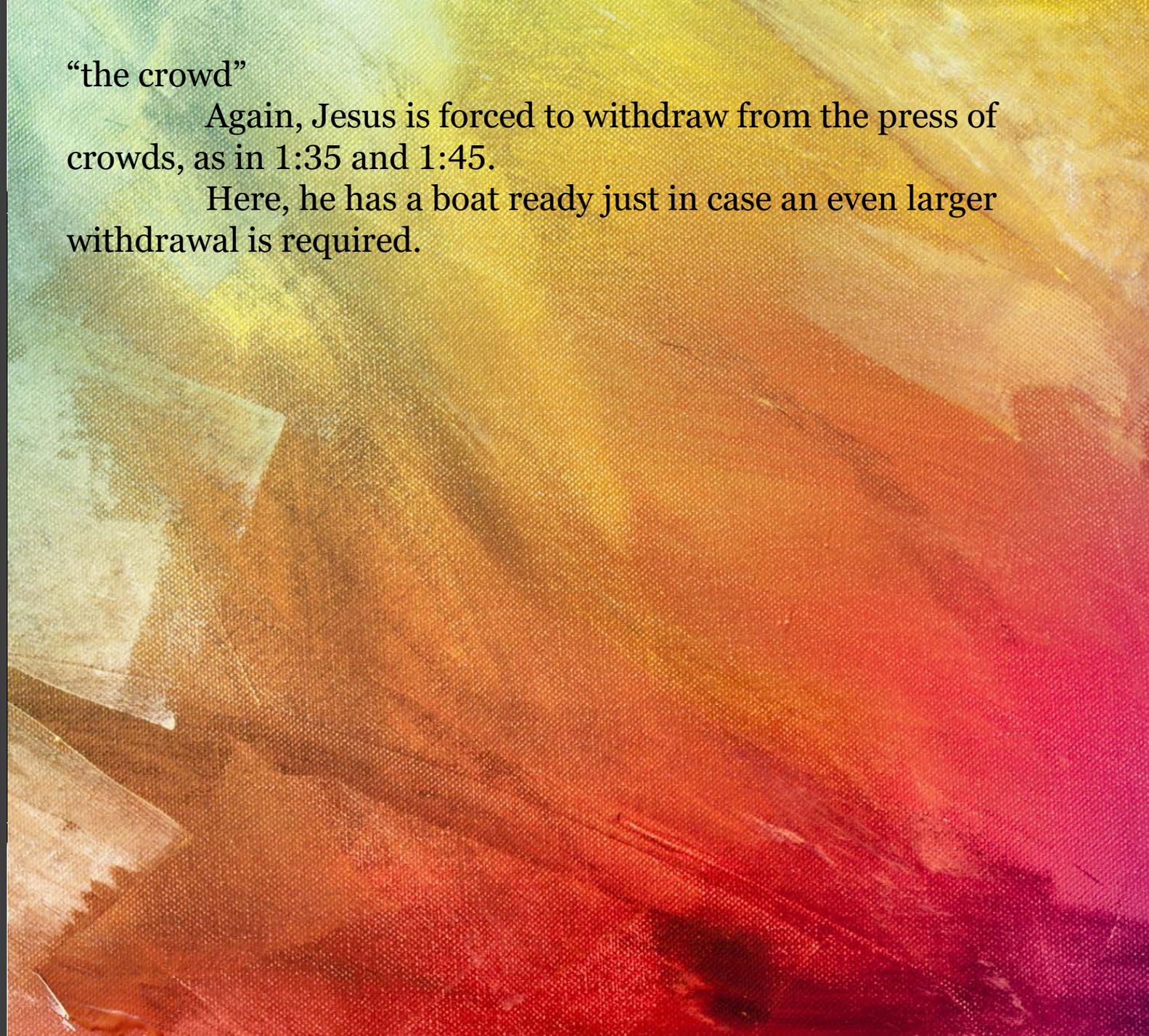
Mark 3:9 (NIV)

Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him.

“the crowd”

Again, Jesus is forced to withdraw from the press of crowds, as in 1:35 and 1:45.

Here, he has a boat ready just in case an even larger withdrawal is required.



Mark 3:10 (NIV)

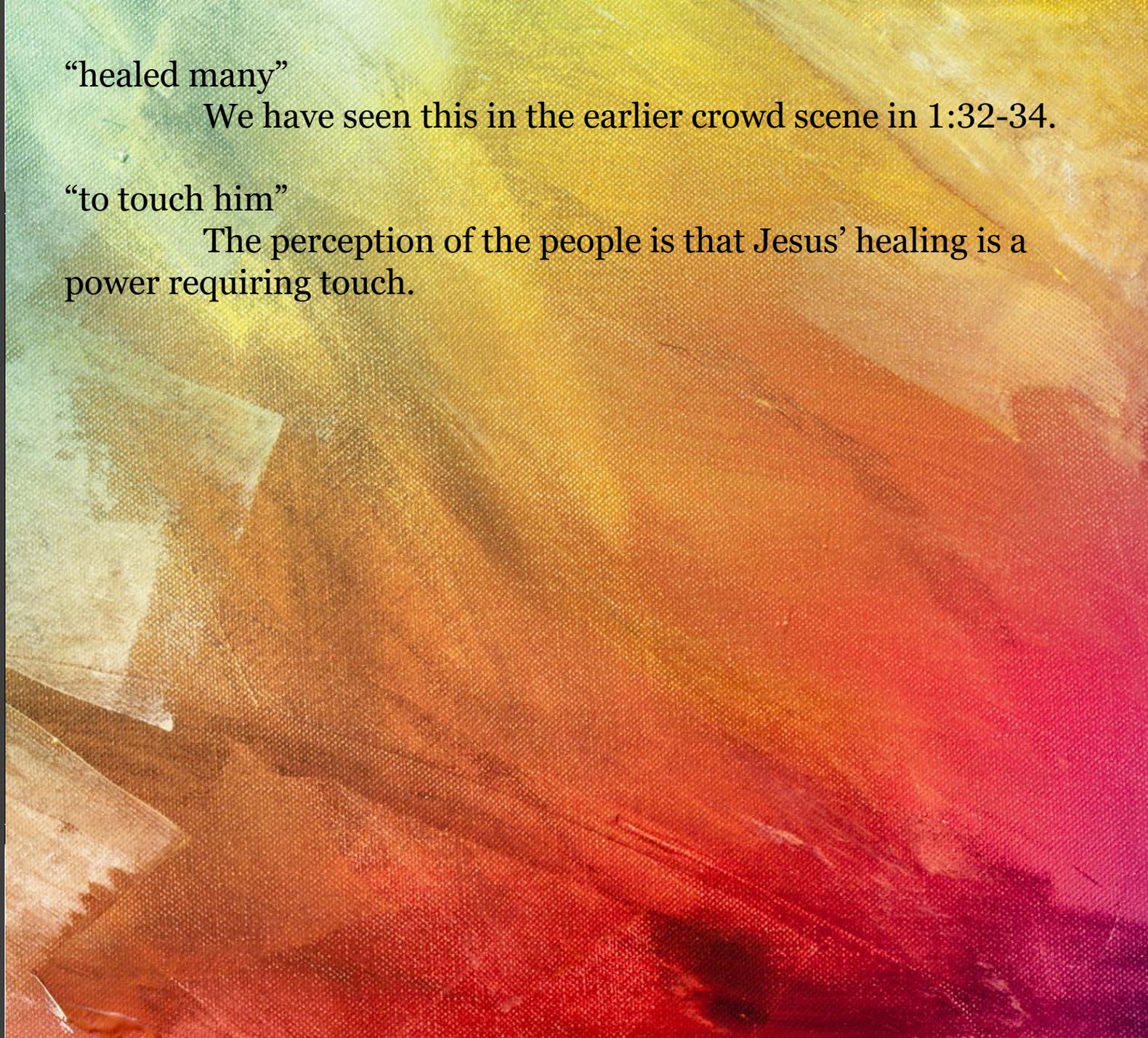
For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.

“healed many”

We have seen this in the earlier crowd scene in 1:32-34.

“to touch him”

The perception of the people is that Jesus’ healing is a power requiring touch.



Mark 3:11 (NIV)

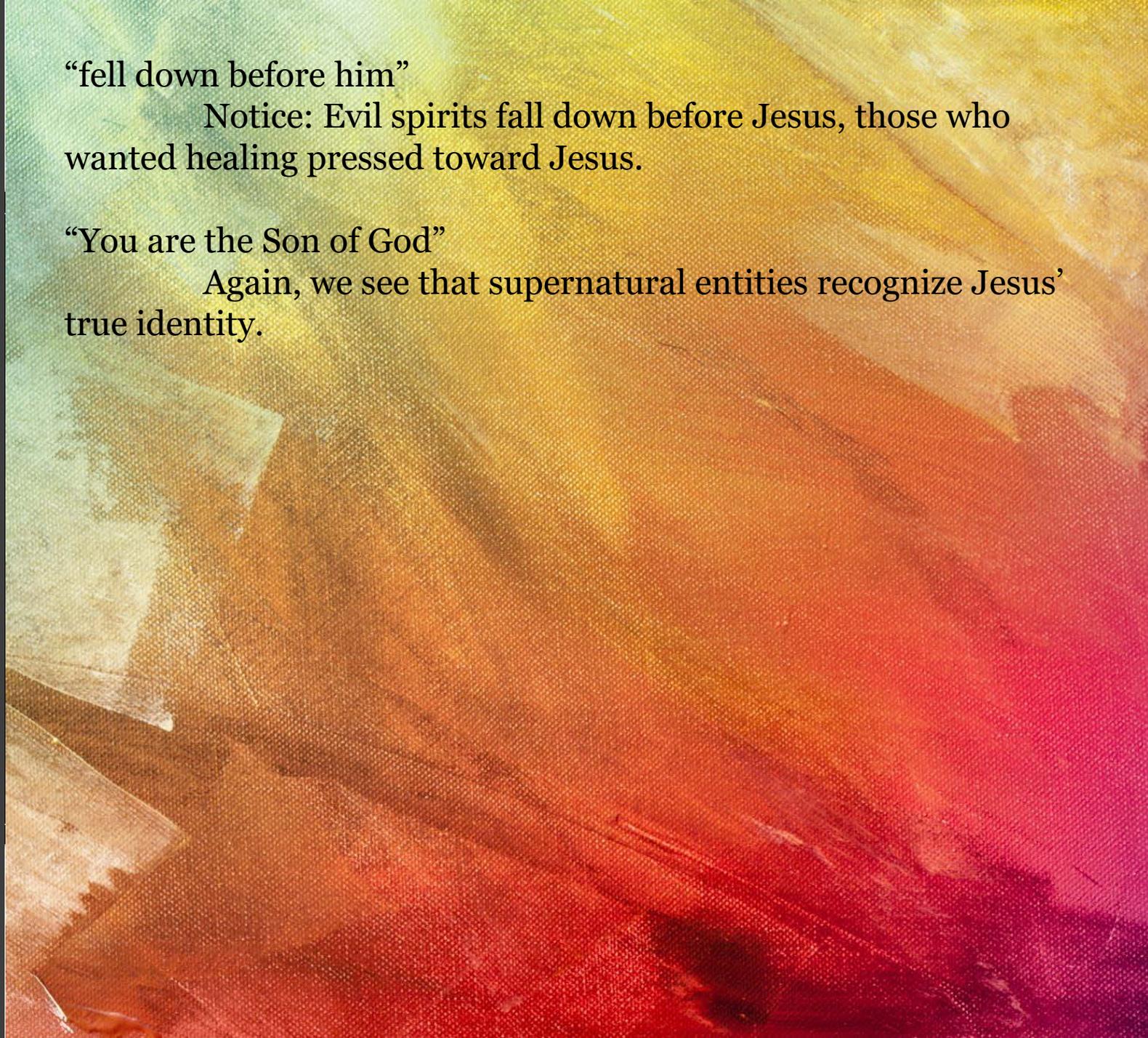
Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”

“fell down before him”

Notice: Evil spirits fall down before Jesus, those who wanted healing pressed toward Jesus.

“You are the Son of God”

Again, we see that supernatural entities recognize Jesus’ true identity.



Mark 3:12 (NIV)

But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

“not to tell”

We also get, once again, the Messianic secret.

To summarize, Mark 3:7-12 reminds us, again:

People are attracted to Jesus, especially those in need of healing or exorcism.

These people come from a wide geographical area.

Evil spirits know Jesus' identity but are not allowed to speak of it.

For pragmatic reasons (it would hinder Jesus' work)

Due to inappropriateness (for good news to be proclaimed by demons)

Because of timing (prior to Jesus' death and resurrection)

In contrast, at this point, disciples, crowds, and opponents all have knowledge about Jesus, but it is incomplete.

Mark 3:13 (NIV)

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.

“called to him those he wanted”

Note: Their first priority is not WORKING for Jesus, but being WITH Jesus – Jesus called them TO HIM.

Being attached to Jesus brings about deeper heart change as we absorb Jesus’ character by being WITH Jesus.

This also affirms the biblical concept that we respond to GOD’S call on our lives.

“they came to him”

This again implies leaving a former way of life, just as it did with the callings of Simon, Andrew, James, John, and Levi that we have seen before.

Mark 3:14-15 (NIV)

He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.

“appointed twelve”

There is some disagreement among scholars as to whether this is ALL those who “came” in verse 13, or a subset.

There is a clear reference here to the twelve tribes of Israel – thereby implying an eschatological (end times) restoration of ALL Israel.

In other words, this is the initial formation of a NEW “people of God”, with these twelve as the new “patriarchs”, and Jesus as king (remember, king=channel of life and blessing).

Genesis 12:1-3 – “The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’”

This promise is now to be continued and fulfilled through Jesus and ALL his disciples, including the spiritual descendants of the apostles.

Mark 3:14-15 (NIV)

He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.

“apostles”

This comes directly from the Greek “apostolos”, meaning “ones sent out”

“be with him ... and send them out”

Both? This seems contradictory!

But this is KEY – staying attached to Jesus (being WITH HIM) while going out to do his work (being SENT OUT).

“to preach”

This is just what Jesus has done, and his stated purpose in 1:14-15 and 1:38.

“authority”

This authority, for the apostles, comes directly as a result of staying connected to Jesus.

The image of the vine and branches from the Gospel of John may be helpful here:

John 15:5 – “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Mark 3:16 (NIV)

These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);

“These are the twelve”

The twelve apostles are now to be identified by name.

But there are complications with the lists of the twelve apostles across the various gospels.

We will look at these complications in the following verses.

“Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter)”

He comes first in all the other lists (Matthew 10:2, Luke 6:13, and Acts 1:13), as well as here.

From now on, Mark will refer to him as Peter everywhere, although Jesus will again refer to him as Simon after finding him asleep in the garden in 14:37.

Mark makes no attempt to explain the name change, as Matthew does.

Matthew 16:18 – “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (NIV)

In John’s Gospel, the name change happens at Simon’s calling.

John 1:42 – “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas (which, when translated, is Peter).’”

Mark 3:17 (NIV)

James son of Zebedee
and his brother John (to
them he gave the name
Boanerges, which
means Sons of
Thunder);

“James son of Zebedee and his brother John”

These were also identified as sons of Zebedee in 1:19.

They are second and third in this list, just as they are in Acts 1:13.

Peter, James, and John are referred to later in 5:37, 9:2, and 14:33. This indicates their relative importance in the tradition.

“Boanerges”

Like Simon, these brothers also get a new name – but unlike “Peter”, this new name disappears from history.

“Sons of Thunder”

This is Mark’s translation of “Boanerges”, but it is notoriously difficult for modern linguists to arrive at that translation!

It seems to be the Greek transliteration of an underlying Aramaic word, but if so, does not follow any of the rules of transliteration, and it is difficult to arrive at “Boanerges” from the Hebrew or Aramaic for “thunder”!

Mark 3:18 (NIV)

Andrew, Philip,
Bartholomew,
Matthew, Thomas,
James son of
Thaddaeus, Simon the
Zealot,

“Andrew”

Fourth in the list, although he was called at the same time as Simon in 1:16-18!

Apparently, he is “just outside” the inner circle of Peter, James, and John.

“Philip”

This is a Greek name.

He doesn't show up again in Mark, but he does in John's Gospel, several times.

We learn there that he is from Bethsaida, just like Peter and Andrew.

“Bartholomew”

The name means “son of Talmi”.

Some scholars believe this is the same disciple as “Nathanael” of John 1:45.

“Matthew”

Matthew 10:3 says this is the tax collector of Matthew 9:9, who is called Levi in Mark 2:14.

Mark does not make this connection.

Mark 3:18 (NIV)

Andrew, Philip,
Bartholomew,
Matthew, Thomas,
James son of
Thaddaeus, Simon the
Zealot,

“Thomas”

Like Philip, he is not mentioned again in Mark, but has an important role in John’s Gospel.

“James, son of Alphaeus”

The patronymic (relationship to the father) is to distinguish him from James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee.

“Thaddaeus”

This correlates to Matthew 10:3, but Luke’s Gospel has instead “Judas son of James”, as does Acts 1:13.

Some scholars believe Thaddaeus was a second name that the early church began to prefer, to avoid the name Judas.

“Simon the Zealot”

A zealot was someone actively seeking to overthrow Rome politically and restore an independent Jewish kingdom.

Mark 3:19 (NIV)

and Judas Iscariot, who
betrayed him.

“Judas Iscariot”

He comes last in the list, for obvious reasons.

“Iscariot”

This could mean “from Kerioth”. This is the most common scholarly reading of the word.

According to John’s Gospel, his father went by the same name, lending credence to it being a geographical identifier:

John 6:71 – “He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the twelve, was later to betray him.” (NIV)

It could also be a derivation from the Hebrew word “saker”, meaning “liar” – potentially, an epithet applied later.

It could also be derived from the Greek “sicarius”, meaning “assassin”, identifying him as one of the “Sicarii”, an even more extreme zealot known for assassinating Roman leadership whenever the opportunity presented itself.

“who betrayed him”

This is the first we hear of this, anticipating the later action.

Also note that, coming immediately after the call and its purpose, the identification serves to accentuate the significance of such an action.



Bibliography

The following materials have been used as sources for this Bible study:

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