

JESUS' IMPACT UPON RELIGIONISTS: CALLING JESUS DEMON-POSSESSED

MARK 03:22–30

Introduction – Response to Jesus Christ

Who was Jesus Christ? Was He really of God, or was He of the devil? That is, was He evil, an imposter, a deceiver who set out to mislead the world into thinking that He was the Son of God? Is belief in Him really the only way to God? Are His teachings the *only* way to live and to experience deliverance now and eternally?

The religionists of Jesus' day believed He was evil. In fact, they believed He was an embodiment of Satan himself. This passage discusses their charge and Jesus' answer. And it challenges us to accept the truth about Jesus.

- I. The Scribes, the investigative commission, gave their judgment about Jesus (vv. 22-23).
- II. Rebuttal 1: internal strife always divides and destroys (vv. 24-26).
- III. Rebuttal 2: Satan's kingdom has been breached (v. 27).
- IV. Rebuttal 3: God's love is universal (v. 28).
- V. Rebuttal 4: there is one danger — ascribing God's work to the devil (vv. 29-30).

I. *Mark 03:22–23 Religionists, Accusations*

Apparently, the ruling body in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin, had heard about a prophet in Galilee who was carrying on an unusual ministry. Unbelievable miracles were being claimed. The prophet, who called Himself Jesus of Nazareth, needed to be checked out to make sure He was not teaching error and misleading the people; not threatening insurrection against the Jewish religion and nation which was under Roman domination. The Sanhedrin sent a delegation to Capernaum to investigate Jesus (Mk. 2:6-7; 3:1-2). The Scribes, the investigative commission from Jerusalem, gave their judgment about Jesus.

1. Their charge was terrible: “He is possessed by Beelzebub” (See *Beelzebub*, Mk. 3:22; *Religionists Opposed Jesus Christ*, Mk. 3:22); that is, He was *possessed, indwelt, controlled, under the supreme power* of Beelzebub, the supernatural power of evil. Note: they were not saying that Jesus was in alliance with the devil. Their charge went much farther than an alliance. They were saying that Jesus was an incarnation of evil, of the devil himself.

The religionists and people were bitter, stinging, rough and cutting in their accusations.

- => “He is demon-possessed and raving mad” (Jn. 10:20).
 - => “[He is] a Samaritan, and demon-possessed” (Jn. 8:48).
 - => He is born out of wedlock (Jn. 8:41; Mt. 1:18-19).
 - => “[He is] a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of [cohabiter with] tax collectors and sinners” (Lk. 7:34).
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Note two things.

- a. The religionists could not deny the power of Jesus: lives were being dramatically and radically changed; evil spirits were being “driven out” of people. Exorcism, the casting out of evil spirits, was not a new or unusual thing to the people of Jesus’ day.

=> Jesus referred to Jewish exorcists (Mt. 12:27; Lk. 11:19).

=> The disciples referred to a man who professed to be a follower of Jesus and who was casting out demons in Jesus’ name (Mk. 9:38).

=> There was a Jewish priest who had seven sons, and each of the sons claimed to be an exorcist (Acts 19:13-16).

The religionists were without excuse. They should have understood exorcism. The presence of evil spirits and men’s attempting to drive them out were common enough occurrences for them to understand (See *Beelzebub; Satan*, Mt. 12:24; 12:27-28).

The point is this: exorcism was not a *new* thing, but what Jesus was doing was new. Others were not always successful in casting out evil spirits. They failed, lacked permanent and perfect power to overcome the world of evil — but not Jesus. His power was universal and perfect, always effective. By just speaking a simple word, the most powerful results imaginable happened. Evil spirits within men, spirits which corrupted men’s lives, were driven out; and the men were dramatically and forcefully changed.

The religionists could not deny the fact. They had to deal with the matter of Jesus’ power. Some explanation, some theory had to be given. Their conclusion was: “He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

- b. The religionists were deliberately trying to disprove Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God. If they could prove He was an imposter, a fraud, a deceiver, an evil man misleading others, a man linked to evil and to the devil, then His claims would be disproven and the people would cease to follow Him.

2. Jesus had to answer the charge. His rebuttal was a forceful argument. He asked *the logical and irrefutable* question: “How can Satan drive out Satan?” The answer was unavoidable, inevitable. Satan would never cast out evil. If he did, he would be working against himself, and that is not his purpose. He is out to build and expand evil, not to destroy it. To say otherwise is illogical; it does not make sense. Jesus used four rebuttals to prove His point.

MARK 03:22 BEELZEBUB

An idol god of the ancient Philistines. The name means *the god of flies*. But the Jews called the idol *the god of filth* or *the god of dung* (Beelzebub). The name was eventually ascribed to Satan as the prince of evil spirits (See *Satan*, Rev. 12:9). □

MATHEW 12:24 BEELZEBUB; SATAN

The charge against Jesus was that His power to deliver men from evil was not of God, but of the devil (See *Opposition to Jesus*, Mk. 3:22; *Satan*, Rev. 12:9). The idea was that He was sent by the devil to deliberately deceive people and to lead them away from the true traditional religion and beliefs. Note two things.

1. The evidence of supernatural power was clearly seen and admitted even by the enemies of Christ. Some force other than human power was healing people and performing miracles. Jesus' enemies were forced to look for answers elsewhere.
2. The depth of unbelief is seen here. It is *obstinate unbelief*, a *rooted malignity* that is full of malice and attempts to injure. It is an unbelief that will not surrender to the claims of Christ despite the evidence. The evidence was clear. Lives were changed and miracles did happen; yet some persons still refused to believe, and they hardened themselves in that unbelief. They searched out other answers for the miraculous power of Christ. They sought to attribute His power to anything that would keep them from having to confess Christ and surrender their own lives and possessions to Him. □

MARK 03:22 RELIGIONISTS OPPOSED JESUS CHRIST

The religionists were bitter, stinging, rough, and cutting in their accusations against Jesus. "He is demon-possessed and raving mad" (Jn. 10:20). He is a "Samaritan and is demon-possessed" (Jn. 8:48); He is born out of wedlock (Jn. 8:41). He is "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Lk. 7:34).

Why did the religionists (Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes or teachers of the law) oppose Jesus so vehemently? There were several reasons.

1. Religion gives a sense of security. It is the opium of the people, as Karl Marx said. It makes a person secure and comfortable with himself. Therefore, a truly professional and committed religionist opposes anything that threatens the security he has found.
2. Religionists oppose change. Every true religionist believes his way is the way, the truth and the life. There is no reason to change so long as one's needs are being met.
3. Religion can lead to position, pride, and a sense of importance. One of the most difficult things in the world is for a person to give up his position and admit he is wrong. To do so is to deny his importance. Think about it — for this is exactly what Christ demands of every man (Lk. 9:23). This is the reason so many of the gifted and the powerful of the world reject Christ and become hostile to Him. They fail to see that they are what God has made them. Their knowledge, rank and power would not attract God, and such things would not secure any special favour from God (1 Cor. 1:26-31). One of the most tragic characteristics of modern society is its pride and self-sufficiency. □

REVELATION 12:09 SATAN

The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Revelation 12:09

Satan is called “the great dragon...that ancient serpent.” His name is *Lucifer*. He was probably one of the highest angels ever created by God, but he fell because of selfishness and pride (Isa. 14:12; cp. 1 Tim. 3:6; Rev. 12:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Pet. 5:8.). He is “an angel of light” with such deceptive and seductive power that even some ministers follow him, ministers who “masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Throughout Scripture Satan is described as follows:

1. He is “the god of this world” who blinds men’s minds (2 Cor. 4:4).
2. He is “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:20; 16:11) and “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2; 6:12).
3. He is Satan, which means the adversary (1 Chr. 21:1; Job 1:6; 2:1-6; Zec. 3:1; Mt. 4:10; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:8; Jn. 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18; Rom. 16:20).
4. He is the devil, which means the slanderer (Mt. 4:1, 5, 8, 11; Lk. 4:2-6, 13; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 20:2).
5. He is the deceiver of the whole world (2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).
6. He is the tempter (Mt. 4:3; 1 Th. 3:5).
7. He is the evil one (Mt. 6:13; 13:19, 38).
8. He is the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).
9. He is the accuser of our brothers (Rev. 12:10).
10. He is a murderer (Jn. 8:44).
11. He is called Beelzebub (Mt. 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15).
12. He is called Belial (2 Cor. 6:15).
13. He is called Abaddon (Rev. 9:11).
14. He is called the angel of the Abyss or bottomless pit (Rev. 9:11).
15. He is called Apollyon (Rev. 9:11).
16. He is called the enemy (Mt. 13:39).
17. He is called the gates of Hades (hell) (Mt. 16:18).
18. He is called an enormous red dragon (Rev. 12:3).
19. He is called a lying spirit (1 Kng. 22:22).
20. He is called that ancient serpent (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; cp. Gen. 3:4, 14; 2 Cor. 11:3).
21. He is called the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:13).

22. He called the prince of devils (Mt. 12:24).
23. He is called the ruler of this dark world (Eph. 6:12).
24. He is called the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Eph. 2:2).
25. He is called the evil spirit (Mt. 12:43).

Satan's purpose in making war against God is twofold.

1. Satan's purpose is power and worship, to receive as much of the power and worship of the universe as possible (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:11-17). He goes about this in three ways.
 - => He opposes and disturbs God's work in the world (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezk. 28:11-17; Job 1:6; 2:1-6; Mt. 4:10; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:8; Rev. 12:7-9).
 - => He discourages believers through various strategies (Lk. 22:31; Eph. 6:10-12).
 - => He arouses God's justice against people by leading people to sin and to deny and rebel against God. And when they do, God's justice has to act and judge people to the fate of their choice: that of living with Satan eternally (Mt. 12:25-26; Jn. 13:31-32).
2. Satan's purpose is to hurt and cut the heart of God. Why? Because God has judged and condemned him for rebelling against God. Therefore, Satan does all he can to get back at God. The best way he can do this is to turn the hearts of people away from God and lead them to sin and to follow the way of evil.

However, Christ has broken Satan's power by two acts (Jn. 12:31-32; 16:11; 8:44; Col. 2:15).

1. By never giving in to the devil's temptation (Mt. 4:1-11) and by never sinning (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ overcame sin. He was righteous: He was perfect.
2. By destroying the devil's power of death. Christ was not held by physical or spiritual death (Heb. 2:14-15). He arose and ascended to God's right hand.

It is for this reason that the Bible says "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4); and again. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). □

II. *Mark 03: 24–26 Effect of Internal Strife*

The first rebuttal by Jesus was that internal strife always divides and destroys. He used two illustrations to enforce His point.

1. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Civil war, internal strife, and divisiveness will cause a kingdom to fall. It cannot last, not if its subjects fight among themselves.
2. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Constant bickering and arguing will cause the house to crumble. A house cannot last, not if its subjects strive, fuss, quarrel and fight all the time. The house will break up.

3. Satan cannot be rising up against himself. He would be driving out his own evil spirits and destroying his own kingdom of evil subjects. He would be breaking his rule and reign over lives.

There is no conceivable way Jesus is from anywhere other than from God. He had nothing whatsoever to do with evil or evil spirits, except to drive them out of men's lives. He had come to free men so that they might live righteously and godly in this present world. He is God's representative among men, not Satan's. He is exactly who He claims to be, the Son of God Himself. To argue any other position is illogical.

John 3:18 *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”*

John 10:36-38 *“What about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God's Son’? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”*

Heb 10:29 *How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

III. Mark 03:27 Defeat of the Kingdom of Satan

The second rebuttal by Jesus is that Satan's kingdom had been breached. God had broken into Satan's house and kingdom by using the power of Christ to free those enslaved by Satan. Just as an invader enters a strong man's house, ties him up, and then carry off his possessions, so Jesus has now invaded Satan's kingdom of evil. Christ is now setting men free, free from evil spirits. Satan is now being conquered. The power of Christ is now delivering men from the world and enslavement of evil. Men can now be set free from evil - even from the evil of death itself (see Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:15; I Cor. 15:20-58.)

John 12:30-31 *Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”*

1 Cor 15:20-23 *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.*

Col 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

Heb 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

IV. Mark 03:28 The Universal Love of God

The third rebuttal by Jesus was that God's love is universal. God forgives all sin – even blasphemy – that insults, curses and reviles God (See *Scribes, Teachers of the Law*, Lk. 6:2). Men need to know this glorious truth. There is no sin that God does not forgive. A man can be forgiven anything, no matter how terrible or vile. He can be forgiven if he will turn to Christ, confess his sin, and repent (See *Forgiveness*, Mt. 26:28).

The behaviour of Jesus upon the cross shows just how universal God's love really is. The savage treatment and the vulgar insults inflicted upon Jesus were horrible. Such treatment shows the base, sinful nature of all men; yet Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them" (Lk. 23:34).

Thought 1. God's love and forgiveness are universal. God loves every man and will forgive any man no matter how much the man has sinned and blasphemed God.

Acts 13:38 "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you."

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

1 Tim 2:3-6 This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given in its proper time.

Isa 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

Isa 44:22 "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you."

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

LUKE 06:02 SCRIBES, TEACHERS OF THE LAW

These Pharisees were probably Scribes, the teachers of the law. The Scribes were a profession of men sometimes called lawyers (Mt. 22:35). They were some of the most devoted and committed men to religion in all of history and were of the sect known as the Pharisees. However, every Pharisee was not a Scribe. A Scribe was more of a scholar, more highly trained than the average Pharisee. They had two primary functions.

1. The Scribes copied the written law, the Old Testament Scriptures. In their copying function, they were strict copiers, meticulously keeping count of every letter in every word. This exactness was necessary, for God Himself had given the written law to the Jewish nation. Therefore, the law was not only the very Word of God, it was the greatest thing in the life of the Jewish nation. It was considered the most precious possession in all the world; consequently, the Jewish nation was committed to the preservation of the law (Neh. 8:1-8). A young Jew could enter no greater profession than the profession of Scribes.
2. The Scribes studied, classified and taught the moral law. This function brought about the Oral or Scribal Law that was so common in Jesus' day. It was the law of rules and regulations. There were, in fact, so many regulations that over fifty large volumes were required when they were finally put into writing. The great tragedy was that through the centuries, the Jews began to place the Oral law over the written law.

The Scribes felt that the law was God's final word. Everything God wanted man to do could be deduced from it; therefore, they drew out of the law every possible rule they could and insisted that life was to be lived in conformity to these rules. Rules were to be a way of life, the preoccupation of a man's thoughts. At first these rules and regulations were taught by word of mouth; however, in the third century after Christ, they were put into certain writings.

The Halachoth: rules that were to govern the ritual of worship.

The Talmud, made up of two parts.

=> The Mishnah: sixty-three discussions of various subjects of the law.

=> Gemara: the sacred legends of the people.

Midrashim: the commentaries on the writings.

Hagadci: thoughts on the commentaries. □

MATHEW 26:28 FORGIVENESS (APHESIN)

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Mathew 26:28

Forgive means to send off, to send away. The wrong is cut out, sent off, and sent away from the wrongdoer. The sin is separated from the sinner.

There are four main ideas in the Biblical concept of forgiveness.

1. There is the idea of why forgiveness is needed. Forgiveness is needed because of wrongdoing and guilt and the penalty arising from both (see Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 8:1).

2. There is the idea of a *once-for-all* forgiveness, a total forgiveness. A man is *once-for-all* forgiven when he receives Jesus Christ as his Saviour. Belief in Jesus Christ is the only condition for being forgiven *once-for-all* (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 4:5-8).
3. There is the idea of forgiveness that maintains fellowship. Fellowship exists between God as Father and the believer as His child. When the child does wrong, the fellowship is disturbed and broken. The condition for restoring the fellowship is confessing and forsaking the sin (Psa. 66:18; Prov. 28:13; 1 Jn. 1:7).
4. There is the idea of a *releasing from guilt*. This is one of the differences between man's forgiving a man and God's forgiving a man. A man may forgive a person for wronging him, but he can never remove the guilt that his friend feels. And often he cannot remove the resentment he feels within his own heart. Only God can remove the guilt and assure the removal of resentment, and God does both. God forgives and erases the guilt and resentment (Psa. 51:2, 7-12; 103:12; 1 Jn. 1:9). □

V. *Mark 03:29–30 The Unforgivable Sin*

The fourth rebuttal by Jesus was that there is one danger - the danger of committing the unforgivable sin. The unforgivable sin is ascribing God's work to the devil.

The unforgivable sin is committed by the man who continues and continues...

- to reject the *promptings* of the Holy Spirit.
- to blind himself to the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
- to wilfully sin despite conviction by the Holy Spirit.
- to insist on his own way.
- to oppose the work of the Holy Spirit.
- to justify himself in his sinful behaviour.

John 3:36 “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”

John 8:24 “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”

Heb 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ■