

JESUS' IMPACT UPON FRIENDS: CALLING JESUS MAD AND INSANE MARK 03: 20–21

Introduction – Accusations Against Jesus Christ

The Authorized Version (KJV) is probably correct in using “friends” in verse 21 instead of “kinsmen” or family. Jesus’ impact upon His family is discussed in Mk. 3:31.

- I. The crowd: they were so zealous that Jesus was unable to eat (v. 20).
- II. The friends or family: they acted the very opposite (v. 21).

MARK 03:20–21 RESPONSE TO JESUS CHRIST

From this point to the end of the chapter Mark shows the difference between the feelings of the crowd and the feelings of others about Jesus. In verse 20 he shows the feelings and the support of the crowd. Then he shows the enormous contrast of the feelings of three groups who should have been the very ones to support Jesus. There are the contrasted feelings...

- of His friends (or family) – who charged Him with being mad and insane (Mk. 3:21).
- of the religionists – who charged Him with being demon-possessed (Mk. 3:22-30).
- of His very own family – who charged Him with being an embarrassment (Mk. 3:31-35).

In the present passage, the contrast between the feelings of the crowd and Jesus’ friends is clearly seen. And in the contrast much is to be learned. □

I. *Mark 03:20 The Zeal and Enthusiasm of the crowd*

The zeal and enthusiasm of the crowd for Christ was great, so great that He was unable to care for Himself. He could not even find time to eat. Note two points.

1. Jesus had not called for the crowd to come; they just came. They filled the house, overflowing into the street. Some had come more out of curiosity than need, but others had come to hear and learn. Still others had come to be helped and healed.

Thought 1. Zeal and enthusiasm for Christ are so desperately lacking. Men should be flocking to Him by the multitudes, but they are not. Why?

- => Do they love the world and the things of the world too much (1 Jn. 2:15-16)?
 - => Do they love the body and its feelings too much?
 - => Do they love pride and fame and power too much?
 - => Do they just not know? Have they not heard (Rom. 10:14-15)?
 - => Is the witness and life of believers too weak (Eph. 4:17-24)?
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2. The crowd was so large and pressuring. Therefore, Christ and the disciples were unable to take care of their physical needs. However, Christ did not turn the crowd away; He ministered to them.

Thought 1. Christ ministered despite enormous inconvenience and disruption. A unique opportunity presented itself and He grasped it. He denied Himself, His own need, in order to help others. What a lesson for us!

Mat 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Isa 55:1 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

II. **Mark 03:21 Response of the Family**

The treatment of Jesus by some friends (or family) differed enormously from the crowd. Whereas the crowd responded to Jesus, some friends heard of His behaviour and concluded that He was insane, so they sought to take custody of Him. Apparently the friends were close to the family; therefore, they cared deeply for Jesus. They felt He was in danger and wanted to help the family and Him.

Note the words “when his family (or friends) heard *about this*.” In the present passage, the Greek uses a participle meaning *having heard* (akou santes). The idea is that the friends or family heard not only about the enormous crowds, but they heard *all about Jesus*: His phenomenal miracles, claims, and teachings; the prophetic esteem which the people heaped upon Him; the opposition which was now threatening His life. All this led the friends of the family to think He was insane. At least seven things contributed to the charge of insanity.

1. Jesus was thought to be crazed because of the zeal and enthusiasm of the crowd. It was felt that the crowd’s zeal had turned His head and caused Him to overly evaluate Himself. He was reveling in their attention and adulation. It was reported that He was so caught up in the crowd’s enthusiasm that He was neglecting the care of His body, even to the point of not eating meals.
2. Jesus was thought to be crazed because of the response of the people and the esteem with which they held Him. It was thought that such esteem had twisted His mind, causing Him to think too highly of Himself. There were reports that He was claiming to be the Messiah and even the Son of God Himself.
3. Jesus was thought to be crazed because He was selecting a queer band of disciples: rough-hewn fishermen (Peter, James, and John); despised and hated sinners and tax collectors

(Mathew and probably James, the son of Alphaeus); a revolutionary zealot (Simon the Zealot); a seeker who was spiritually troubled (Nathaniel). A sane man set on religious purposes would never choose such men, not if he wished to succeed in society.

4. Jesus was thought to be crazed because His life and behaviour were so radically different from normal life and behaviour. What He was doing and saying was diametrically opposed to the way anything had ever been done before. He differed so much from everyone else. His very life convicted any who confronted Him, and His words demanded either acceptance or rejection.
5. Jesus was thought to be crazed because the authorities were opposing and threatening to kill Him, yet He refused to back down or flee. He even refused to move elsewhere. A normal person who had a mission to accomplish would at least flee elsewhere until he had time to regroup and plan some other way to achieve his purpose.
6. Jesus was thought to be crazed because His healing ministry necessitated some explanation. There were so many healings, so many miraculous events that a person was forced to come up with some theory. Jesus was either who He claimed, the Son of God; or He was filled with a supernatural spirit other than God's, a spirit that made Him mad, the spirit of the devil. All kinds of theories were now running rampant. There were the theories that He was...
 - John the Baptist raised from the dead (Mt. 14:1-2).
 - Elijah, Jeremiah, or some prophet sent back to life (Mt. 16:14).
 - Beelzebub (Mt. 12:22-32; Mk. 3:22-30).
 - insane (Mk. 3:21).
7. Jesus was thought to be crazed because His teaching and doctrine were so different from anyone else's. In fact, what He taught often differed radically from all that *had ever* been taught. As Festus said to Paul, "Your great learning is driving you insane" (Acts 26:24).

Thought 1. Is Jesus who He claimed? Think of the alternatives:

- (1) He was truly the Son of God.
- (2) He was demon-possessed; that is, His power came from an evil spirit.
- (3) He was insane, mad, mentally deceived and deranged.
- (4) He was deliberately lying about being the Son of God, deliberately deceiving people in order to secure a following to boost His ego.

Mat 14:33 *Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

Mark 1:1 *The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

John 1:34 *“I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”*

John 3:16-18 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 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 9:35-37 *Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is he, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.”*

John 10:36 *“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’?”*

John 11:25-27 *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”*

Acts 9:20 *At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.*

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?*

1 John 4:15 *If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.*

Thought 2. The call of the hour is: “Believe Jesus. Trust Him. He was not insane. He is truly the Son of the living God.”

Thought 3. Friends (or family) can be wrong, no matter how much they esteem and love us. What they think and how they treat us can often be wrong: the friends of Jesus were wrong.

Thought 4. We must go against friends (or family) sometimes; we must vigorously surrender to God and do His will regardless of what our friends may think. If God calls us to serve Him, then serve Him we must. Friends can oppose God’s will. They may have good intentions, but they cannot know God’s will for another person’s life. God deals, calls and works with each of us individually and personally. Being strong and standing firm in God’s call and will are desperately needed — always.

John 15:16 *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 Cor 15:58 *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

John 6:66-68 *From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."*

Acts 9:15 *But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel." ■*

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. ■

JESUS' IMPACT UPON HIS OWN FAMILY: FEELING JESUS IS AN EMBARRASSMENT

MARK 03:31–35

Introduction — The Family of God

Tongues were buzzing and rumours were flying about Jesus (See *Response to Jesus Christ*, Mk. 3:20-21). The rumours reached Mary and her relatives back in Nazareth. They became extremely concerned over Jesus' welfare and were somewhat embarrassed over Jesus. So they struck out to get Him and bring Him home before something terrible happened. When they arrived and Jesus was informed of their presence. He made a shocking claim: there is a greater family existing than the human family — a family that has supremacy over blood relationships. It is the family of God, the family of all those who do the will of God.

- I. Jesus' family (vv. 31-32).
- II. True kinship is not just blood relationship (v. 33).
- III. True kinship is based on a common relationship with God (vv. 34-35).

I. *Mark 03:31–32 The Concern of the Family*

Jesus' family came to take Him home. His family had not been with Him at this time. They had probably been back in Nazareth. Note the facts given.

1. They were “standing outside,” apparently embarrassed, not wishing to approach Jesus in front of the crowd lest a scene be created.
2. They “sent someone in to call Him” to take Him home.
3. The crowd informed Him of the family's presence outside, and note: they added the words “looking for you.” The crowd was apparently aware of the family's embarrassment and thoughts that He was “out of his mind” and needed to be taken home (v. 21).

Something significant had happened that brought Jesus' family to get Him and take Him home. What happened that caused Mary and His brothers to come for Him? What was so serious that they would send someone else inside to get Him instead of going in themselves or at least waiting until the meeting was over? What would cause them to seek to interrupt and stop the preaching of Jesus? What would cause Jesus to proclaim such shocking words at this time (vv. 34-35)? There seem to be three reasons.

1. The public, even some friends of Jesus and the family, were saying, “He is out of his mind,” mad, insane (Mk. 3:20-21). Two things caused this charge.
 - a. He was working very hard, in fact so hard that He was “not even able to eat” (Mk. 3:20). He was so swamped by people to the extent that He was forced to skip meals and do without rest. His refusing to leave the frenzied atmosphere in order to eat and rest — such behaviour going on day after day and month after month — led some to wonder if He were mad, abnormal in craving the attention and adulation and frenzy of the crowds.
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- b. He was proclaiming Himself to be the Son of God. He made many claims that were so unusual that He was thought insane.
2. The rulers, both political and religious, were increasingly opposing Jesus. The family was alarmed and feared for His life (Mt. 12:1-50; Mk. 3:22-30).
3. The news of His *claim* to be the Son of God reached the family, and the neighbours were saying that such a claim was preposterous, utter insanity. In addition, the neighbours and friends were whispering about His insanity and about His conflict with the leaders of the nation. All this did to Mary and the family what such news would do to any family: it caused concern and stirred a mother's deep love and responsibility for her Son. She left immediately to go for Him, to bring Him home in order to save Him from harm and the family from further embarrassment (Mt. 12:14; Jn.7:1f).

Thought 1. Some penetrating questions need to be asked and answered by all of us.

=> How many are embarrassed by Jesus?

=> How many are ashamed to stand up for Jesus and His claims?

=> How many fear what their neighbours and friends will say if they take a stand for Jesus?

=> How many want to take Jesus home and lock Him up in a room where His claims will not bother anyone?

At this point a legitimate question needs to be asked: How could Mary not believe Jesus' claims after her experience with God concerning the birth of Jesus? The answer is given in an honest and open-hearted study of the Scripture.

1. Mary was a wonderful woman, the woman chosen for a very special mission: to be the person through whom God would send "His one and only Son" into the world (Jn. 3:16). But it must always be remembered that Mary was *only human*. She was a very special woman, yes; nevertheless, she was still only human. Her being special was only in that she was *highly favoured* by God (Lk. 1:28). Her being special was not because of any virtue or merit of her own. It was because of God, because of His mercy and His grace alone.
2. Mary's deep experience with God had happened some thirty years before. Thirty or more years is a long time for human creatures to maintain the reality and meaning of a religious experience. Human emotions rise and fall almost daily.
3. As a mother, as flesh and blood, Mary had a difficult time (as anyone in her situation would) understanding the mission and Messiahship of her Son Jesus.
 - a. Mary had believed God's messenger (Lk. 1:45), but she had not fully understood. She apparently "treasured up all these things [to herself — wisely, we might add], and *pondered* them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19).
 - b. Thirteen years later Mary had difficulty understanding the mission of her twelve year-old Son when He was found in the temple having been lost for two days. When they

found Him, He was engaged in a most unusual questioning with the temple priests. Jesus asked His mother, "Why were you searching for me?...Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Lk. 2:49).

- c. Some seventeen years after the temple experience, Mary called upon her Son to help at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. Jesus saw in the request an opportunity to begin familiarizing His mother with just who He really was, the Son of God. She was slow to grasp His purpose, so He gave her a mild rebuke, "Dear woman, why do you involve me?...my time has not yet come" (Jn. 2:4.)
4. Mary had known Jesus as her child and as a young man for some thirty years. She had known Jesus only in a day-to-day family setting, in a day-to-day routine environment. Then all of a sudden He pulled up stakes, left home, and left what was apparently a flourishing carpentry business. The events that occurred from the moment He left happened so rapidly over the next few months and were so dramatic that Mary was bound to feel bombarded and perplexed. She and all the others who were close to Jesus were having to learn that He was not just a man, but the Son of God Himself. (Mk. 3:21)

II. *Mark 03:33 True Brotherhood*

True kinship is not just blood relationship. Note two facts.

1. Jesus is not downgrading the family or human ties to blood relatives. He was not reacting because He was hurt by their disbelief. Jesus held His family close to His heart just as He did every soul and every home. This is clearly seen in Scripture. His thoughts were tenderly upon His mother and her care while He was dying upon the cross (Jn. 19:27).

In this passage Jesus is not disowning His family nor relegating the family to a position of less importance, nor teaching that the human family matters little to God. What, then, is He doing? He is proclaiming the existence of a unique family — a spiritual family.

1 Tim 5:8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Thought 1. Note several things.

- 1) Jesus was preaching when His family interrupted Him. Think of the different ways He could have reacted, yet notice how He controlled the situation. Every servant confronts interruption sometime. We should control our reactions when we are interrupted, as difficult as it may be.
- 2) Jesus' family felt close enough to Him to interrupt Him. Easy access and familiarity do breed less respect and esteem.
- 3) Jesus uses the interruption to teach a great lesson: God is building a unique family — a spiritual family.

Thought 2. Jesus' family had the opportunity to be with Him daily, the privilege of supporting Him and of learning from Him, yet they were not with Him. Why? Easy access and familiarity often breeds...

- less respect
- unbelief
- less esteem
- contempt
- neglect

We often neglect that which we can have anytime we desire it: parents, children, spouse, friends, worship, Bible study, prayer.

Thought 3. Opposition, even from our family, should not cause us to forsake our calling and mission. Christ continued on fulfilling all that God had called Him to do.

Thought 4. Disruption to our ministry often, comes from friends. It may be unintentional; nevertheless, it is still disruptive. Friends feel close enough to interrupt and say a quick "hello" or to extend a personal invitation, and they expect personal responses. Such often interrupts the ministry, whether preaching, teaching, or preparing to minister. Note that Christ switches the interruption into an opportunity to teach.

No one was ever more devoted to the family than Jesus. This is seen in...

- His care of Mary throughout His life (see Jn. 19:26-27).
- His teaching and the teaching of His disciples throughout Scripture (see Eph. 5:22-6:4).
- His impact upon society's treatment of women, children, and the family (Mk. 10:5; see Col. 3:18-21).
- His own half-brothers who eventually became disciples (Mk.6:3-4).

2. Jesus is saying that human genes, family blood and traits, are not enough to create and make a genuine family. *A true family, a true kinship* does not exist just because some people have common blood and traits. This is clearly seen in the pages of family histories every day. Too many families are in turmoil, divided, and torn apart. Too many families are in constant conflict ranging from mild verbal assaults to murderous assaults. There is...

- parent against child
- sister against sister
- child against parent
- brother against brother
- husband against wife
- relative against relative

Now picture the scene. Jesus is standing before the crowd. He has just been told that His mother and brothers are outside "looking" for Him. In the event He sees a unique opportunity to teach a much needed lesson. Stretching out His arms toward the crowd He cries out, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" He is proclaiming that blood relationships, family genes and traits, are not enough to create true kinship. Something more is needed.

Luke 3:8 *“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”*

John 1:12-13 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*

John 8:33 *They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”*

John 8:39 *“Abraham is our father,” they answered. “If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus, “then you would do the things Abraham did.”*

John 9:28 *Then they hurled insults at him and said, “You are this fellow’s disciple! We are disciples of Moses!”*

1 Pet 1:21 *Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

III. Mark 03:34–35 The Family of God: Believers

True kinship is based on a common relationship with God. True kinship is a spiritual relationship. God is Spirit, and those who would know and follow Him must be in spiritual union with Him. True kinship is a matter of the spirit, heart, and mind (Jn. 4:23-24). All who are in *spiritual union* with God become sons and daughters of God and brothers of Jesus. They comprise the true family of God (2 Cor. 6:17-18; Rom. 8:29).

Jesus points out two facts.

1. True kinship is based upon being a true disciple, a true follower of God. Note the words, “He looked at those seated in a circle around him.” Mathew says that the persons Jesus was looking at were His disciples (Mt. 12:49). He was saying that His true family was the disciples, those who had accepted Him as Lord and Master. It was their acceptance of Him in spirit and heart that bound them together. He was saying that all who follow Him are spiritually united. They constitute a kinship that is based upon having the same Lord and Master, a true kinship that will last forever. (See *Fellowship*, Acts 2:42.)

John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Rom 8:14-17 *Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear; but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate,” says the Lord. “Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.*

Gal 4:4-6 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba. Father.”*

Eph 2:18-19 *For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household.*

Eph 3:14-15 *For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

Heb 2:11 *Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

2. True kinship is based upon doing the will of God. Jesus had given Himself to do God’s will. The disciples had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Master. Therefore, they were committed to do exactly what their Lord did: the will of God. The will of God became the objective and drive of their lives. All true disciples of Jesus have the same objective: to do the will of God. Therefore, it is the spiritual commitment to do the will of God that binds all believers together.

All men who focus their lives upon the will of God are bound together spiritually, bound together to do the will of God. Jesus is saying no greater kinship exists.

Thought 1. The will of God is the law of God.

Psa 40:8 *“I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 Th 5:18 *Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 Pet 2:15 *For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

1 Th 4:3 *It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality. ■*

ACTS 02: 42 FELLOWSHIP

Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 02:41-42

The fellowship wrought by the Spirit of God means more than the association existing in secular groups such as civic clubs and community bodies. There is a vast difference between *community participation* and *spiritual participation*. *Community participation* is based upon neighbourly association. *Spiritual participation* is based upon a spiritual union wrought by the Spirit of God.

The distinctiveness is this: the Holy Spirit is within the Christian believer. The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual union by melting and moulding the heart of the Christian believer to the hearts of other believers. He attaches the life of one believer to the lives of other believers. Through the Spirit of God, believers become one in life and purpose. They have a joint life sharing their blessings and needs and gifts together. Note several things about fellowship that are taught by this passage.

1. Fellowship is being experienced by the new believers because they join other Christians in learning the Scriptures (apostles' teachings) and in worship (prayers and celebrating the Lord's Supper, Acts 2:41-42).
2. Fellowship forbids an unattached Christian life. Their fellowship is maintained because they "are devoted" in the Scriptures and in worship. An unattached Christian life is just impossible.
 - a. Christianity is first an individual matter, but then it becomes a social matter. The Christian is attached to Christ individually, but he is also attached to other believers. He walks with other believers in the Scriptures and in worship.
 - b. Christianity is first a spiritual organism, but then it becomes a spiritual organization. The Christian has an *inward life*, but he also takes on an *outward form* of life. He becomes a living organization with other Christian believers. He sits at the feet of the apostles' teaching and joins right in with other Christians as they worship together.
 - c. Christianity makes the true believer a saint (one who is set apart unto God), but Christianity is made up of *saints* — plural. Christianity is not just one person; Christianity is many persons — *saints*. The word is often used in the New Testament, but it is never used in the singular. Christianity is Christianity because the saints *study the Scriptures together* and *worship together*.

- d. Christianity demands that a believer personally live out such virtues as kindness, long-suffering and love; but the believer can do this only in association with others.
 - e. Christianity means that the Spirit of God has entered the believer's life, but it also means that the Spirit of God has placed the believer into a corporate body (the church), into Christian society itself. The Spirit of God indwells the corporate body of believers as well as the individual (see 1 Cor. 3:16).
3. Spiritual fellowship faces two dangers.
- a. Fellowship and society can be over-emphasized — to the point that individual salvation is missed. An individual must “accept His message” (Acts 2:41).
 - b. Individual salvation and individual worship, whether through nature or by any other means, can be overly stressed — to the point that Christian fellowship and society can be missed (Acts 2:42; see Heb. 10:25).

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Rom 12:5 So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

1 Cor 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Eph 4:13 Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Psa 119:63 I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.

Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name. □