

SESSION 3

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Questioned

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER ALL CREATION, INCLUDING SATAN.
MARK 3:20-30

TO WHAT AUTHORITY DO YOU ANSWER IN YOUR DAILY LIFE?
WHAT IMPACT DOES THAT MAKE ON YOUR LIFE?

Ours is an age of self-proclaimed autonomy. “No one is going to tell me what to do!” is a familiar refrain. Many assert that they are accountable only to themselves. In self-authority, the only guidance a person seeks is one’s own wisdom, and the only allegiance given is to one’s own self-interest. Of course, when every person is their own authority, the result is relational chaos. No wonder the world is a fractured and confused place.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jesus demonstrated His authority in many different areas. After a series of conflicts with religious leaders, Jesus left to expand His work in other places where His authority over unclean spirits was witnessed (Mark 3:11-12). Silencing a demon is a powerful action, but so is calling a human life to a noble task. We shouldn’t overlook Jesus’s exercise of authority in calling His disciples (3:13-19). His compelling presence drew the Twelve and they surrendered their lives to His mission. Answering the call of Jesus to follow Him supersedes all other allegiances, and we see Him asserting His supremacy even over family relationships (3:31-35).

Beginning with chapter 4, Jesus began to exercise His authority in teaching truth to the crowds through the parable of the sower. Mark tended to feature the actions of Jesus more prominently than His teachings. However, when he did, he didn’t usually give detailed specifics of what was said. However, 4:1-34 is an exception to that, for through that parable Jesus gave a thorough discourse and extended explanation on the intrinsic power of the word of God.

Immediately following Jesus’s teaching, He and His disciples traveled across the Sea of Galilee by boat. His calming of a powerful storm showed His authority over nature (4:35-41). A different type of difficulty awaited on the opposite shore when they arrived. They encountered a demon-possessed man in all of his unshackled evil and brokenness. In a dramatic episode, Jesus cast out his demons and demonstrated His authority over powerful evil (5:1-20). As a result, the once-afflicted man became a picture of mental soundness and gave a powerful witness to Jesus.

Finally, Jesus showed that even illness and disease was subject to His command. He possessed the authority to bring healing and resurrection (5:21-43). Interestingly, He dealt first with a case that was long-standing, and not with the urgent situation of a child on her death bed. Regarding Jesus’s timing and work, will we recognize His authority there also?

Mark 3:20-30

20 Jesus entered a **house**, **A** and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat. **21** When his **family** **B** heard this, they set out to restrain him, because they said, “He’s out of his mind.” **22** The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by **Beelzebul**,” **C** and, “He **drives out demons** **D** by the ruler of the demons.” **23** So he **summoned** **E** them and spoke to them in **parables**: **F** “How can Satan drive out Satan? **24** If a kingdom is **divided against itself**, **G** that kingdom cannot stand. **25** If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. **26** And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished. **27** But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the **strong man**. **H** Then he can plunder his house. **28** Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter. **29** But whoever **blasphemes against the Holy Spirit** **I** never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — **30** because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Key Words

A. This home was located in Capernaum, where Jesus had set up His home base during His ministry (Mark 1:29; 2:1).

B. “Friends” (KJV); “own people” (NASB; NKJV)

C. Greek form of the Hebrew word *Baal-zebub* (“lord of the flies”). The word is synonymous with Satan. Rather than honoring God, the leaders said Satan was working through Jesus.

D. The leaders did not deny Jesus’s powers, only the source of His power.

E. “Called them” (NIV; ESV; KJV). Jesus took the initiative in contradicting the false claims made by the religious leaders.

F. An analogy or comparison that includes proverbial sayings, allegories, or narrative.

G. Neither a kingdom nor a house can survive internal division. Strength is found in unity, not in working against itself.

H. In this context, the strong man is Satan, so it took someone stronger than Satan to cast out Satan. This emphasized Jesus’s deity.

I. The one sin that is not forgiven is rejecting or denying God’s work. In this context, the scribes and Pharisees were attributing God’s work to Satan and were in danger of crossing the line into blasphemy.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Skeptics

(Mark 3:20-22)

Believers should not be surprised when others are skeptical about Jesus.

- **How would you encourage a new believer whose faith in Jesus was being challenged or mocked by his or her family?**
- **How do the attitudes of Jesus's family and the religious leaders compare to the attitudes some people have about Jesus today?**

2. Strong Man?

(Mark 3:23-27)

Believers can trust that Jesus has authority over all creation.

- **What are some ways in which Satan takes people captive? How does Jesus break those strongholds?**
- **What arguments do people raise against the authority of Jesus? How can believers respond to those arguments?**
- **How does the authority of Jesus bring peace and disruption at the same time?**

3. Warning

(Mark 3:28-30)

Believers should be heartbroken when people reject Jesus.

- **Why might a person refuse to accept the truth about Jesus?**
- **How would you counsel someone who feared they were no longer a candidate to receive God's forgiveness?**

Apply the Text

Discuss whether your group is submitting to the authority of Jesus.

- **How does a group or an organization determine what authority it acknowledges?**
- **If a change is needed, how does a community find a new authority to follow?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Salvation

Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God. (See Romans 5:8-10; Colossians 1:14.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible dictionary to gain deeper insight into a key word.

Look up the word *blasphemy* in a Bible dictionary to discover its meaning and usage. Write a summary of your findings. Based on your findings and Mark 3:28-30, is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit a one-time act or a disposition? Explain.

DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Mark 3:20-21

Notice the response of Jesus's family to His ministry.

At times we see Jesus being swarmed by the masses in such a way that normal activities were hindered. On this occasion, Jesus and His companions were not even able to eat. As believers, we must be careful in our evaluation of crowds. We tend to measure the viability and even spirituality of an event by how many people show up. What we see here is that the crowds frequently hindered the ministry of Jesus. This isn't to say that large turnouts are bad or that small numbers indicate greater holiness. Rather, we must remember that submission to the authority of Christ is more important than satisfying the desires of the majority.

The value of family is virtually unquestioned. Spiritual and secular people alike can be heard extolling the importance of relationships within families. Because of the priority of the family, we might be prone to accepting it as the highest authority. If Jesus had allowed His family to restrain him, we wouldn't enjoy the salvation provided through Him. The word translated "restrain" is a strong one, sometimes used in the sense of "arrest" or "take by force." Jesus's own brothers believed He was "out of his mind." They did not accept His claims about who He was (John 7:5).

How would you encourage a new believer whose faith in Jesus was being challenged or mocked by his or her family?

Day 2: Mark 3:22

Notice the response of the religious leaders to Jesus's ministry.

While His family's attempt to restrain Him was likely accompanied with good intentions, the same could not be said of the "scribes who had come down from Jerusalem." The scribes were the teachers of the law who saw themselves as guardians of the law. The reference to them coming down from Jerusalem would imply that they were a delegated group of leaders assigned to evaluate Jesus and His teaching. Their accusations of Jesus were scathing. They slandered Him as being in consort with Satan. These religious leaders alleged that Jesus's power to cast out demons was because He Himself was demon-possessed.

The scribes concluded that Jesus was possessed by an evil force and was simply a raving madman. They used the term "Beelzebub," which was a reference to a false Canaanite god. By the first century, the Jews used it as a name for Satan. They did not deny the fact that Jesus was able to free people from evil spirits, but they believed he was using demonic powers to do so.

Do you think the scribes' misunderstanding of Jesus stemmed more from a problem of the mind or of the heart? Explain your answer.

Day 3: Mark 3:23-25

Consider why Jesus spoke to the scribes in parables.

Evidently the accusations by the scribes were not made in the presence of Jesus but found their way back to Him. Therefore, “he summoned them and spoke to them in parables.” We often see the parables as purely educational in nature, but a closer examination reveals that Jesus used parables to confront and expose those who heard them (Mark 4:12). In this particular parable, He confronted the religious leaders. There is no evidence they repented and believed in Jesus.

Jesus posed this question to the scribes: “How can Satan drive out Satan?” To attribute His power of exorcism to Satan was illogical and absurd. The scenario presented by the religious leaders would have the devil working against himself. This reminds us that the arguments raised against the authority of Jesus are always foolish and dismissive of the evidence.

He told a parable that was two-fold in nature, about a kingdom and a house. Both were pictured as being divided against themselves. In both cases the result of division was defeat. The reference to a kingdom seems to anticipate what the New Testament says about the realm of Satan’s activity (Col. 1:13). He is the ruler of this age (Eph. 2:2), but Jesus triumphed over him (Col. 2:15).

What are some ways in which Satan takes people captive?

How does Jesus break those strongholds?

Day 4: Mark 3:26-27

Contemplate the implications of Jesus’s parable.

Jesus emphasized that the only way a person could go in and take something from a stronger person would be to bind that person. In this case, Satan was the strong man and able to take people captive, but Jesus is stronger. His deity and miracles freed people from the devil’s power. Because Jesus has authority over all things, including Satan, our victory in Him is certain.

Jesus’s strength comes not merely in education but in transformation. One of the inadvertent ways in which we diminish the authority of Jesus is by seeing His identity exclusively as a teacher. Indeed, He is that, but He is more than an educator. He came to defeat the power of evil and rescue humanity from the enemy. He has the power and authority to free people from the oppression that holds them in bondage. Christ is first a Savior and then to those He saves He is a teacher. Before we can truly follow His teachings, we must first be saved and given freedom from the power of the strong man.

How does the authority of Jesus bring peace and disruption at the same time?

Can you think of an example in your own life?

Day 5: Mark 3:28-30

Compare Mark 3:29 to Luke 12:10.

While forgiveness is available for all sins, there is one exception: blasphemy “against the Holy Spirit.” To blaspheme is to speak against God. In Luke, Jesus said that speaking against Him can be forgiven (Luke 12:10). Prior to His crucifixion, Roman soldiers mocked Christ (Mark 15:16-20). But even these irreverent insults could have been forgiven through a belief in what Jesus was about to perform, an atoning sacrifice for sin. Jesus said that it is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit that cannot be forgiven. Why is this sin unforgivable? Remember that Jesus’s critics had accused Him of doing miracles in the power of the devil rather than the power of the Holy Spirit. The sin against which Jesus warned was not a single act but a continued refusal to identify Jesus as the Christ and attributing works done by Him to Satan. There was no forgiveness for these religious leaders because they would not seek it where it could be found, in submission to the authority of Jesus. Because it is not a one-time event but a continual attitude, it is “an eternal sin.” They adamantly refused to recognize that Jesus He was the Christ and worked through the power of God.

This warning should not be used to create self-doubt as to whether one has committed the unpardonable sin. This is impossible for anyone who is a follower of Jesus. Rather, the fact that any person might enter a spiritual condition of no return should prompt every believer to pursue an evangelistic lifestyle.

How would you counsel someone who feared they were no longer a candidate to receive God’s forgiveness?

APPLY THE TEXT

Review the lesson passage and all the areas over which Jesus exercises authority. In which of these areas (your mind, your body, your understanding of nature, and your mission in life) does Jesus now exercise authority? In which of them did you once recognize His authority but no longer are doing so?



Questioned

Session 3 • Mark 3:20-30



ENGAGE

PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Conduct an online search for a video clip or GIF of a child saying, “You’re not the boss of me.” Also conduct an online search for a video of a basketball player making a shot for the wrong team. Prepare to display these to the group.

SUMMARIZE: Show the video clip/GIF of a child saying, “You’re not the boss of me” to the group. Ask: **How many of you have ever heard this from a child?** Enlist a volunteer to read the introductory paragraph on page 29.

DISCUSS: Talk about how everyone answers to some authority. Ask: **To what authorities do you answer in your daily life? What impact does that make on your life?**

CONTEXTUALIZE: Use **Pack Item 1** (*Map: Jesus’s Ministry in Mark’s Gospel*) to review the location of Jesus’s Galilean ministry. Remind the group about the various places in which Jesus ministered around the Sea of Galilee.

TRANSITION: *In today’s session, we’re going to look at the nature of Jesus’s authority and how people responded to it.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Mark 3:20-22.**

DISCUSS: Talk about the reaction of the crowd. Note that Jesus did not go seeking crowds to follow him. Ask: **Why were crowds beginning to search for Him?** Share that after hearing about His healing power, crowds began to naturally seek Him out.

- **(3:20)** Jesus had entered someone’s house to eat, but the crowd even followed Him there and disrupted the meal. Many scholars believe this house was probably the home of Peter and Andrew in Capernaum. Whatever the case, the audience was interrupting Jesus’s personal time.

LIST: Write the words *Family* and *Scribes* on the board. Instruct the group to list the reactions of Jesus’s family and the scribes. Discuss similarities and differences. Ask: **What motivated these reactions from Jesus’s family and the scribes?**

- **(3:21)** The Greek wording for “family” is unclear as to who exactly came to the home to confront Jesus. The actual subject in Greek is vague and means “those with Him” or “His own people.” This could

also mean friends. Since Mark referred to Jesus's family later in the passage (vv. 21,31-35), many scholars believe that is who Mark meant here. But either rendering could be correct.

DISCUSS: Consider why the scribes used the name Beelzebub in referring to Jesus. Talk about why the scribes may have believed Jesus was working with demonic power. To provide more information on the background of Beelzebub, distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Who is Beelzebub?*).

- **(3:22)** The term *Beelzebub* was a reference to a false Canaanite god associated with demons. By the first century, the Jews used it as a name for Satan. They did not deny the fact that Jesus was able to free people from evil spirits, but they believed he was using demonic powers to do so.

ASK: How do the attitudes of Jesus's family and the religious leaders compare to the attitudes some people have about Jesus today? (p. 31)

TRANSITION: *The religious leaders were quick to share their thoughts on Jesus and the source of His authority. Let's see how Jesus handled the criticism He received.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 3:23-27.

OBSERVE: Show the basketball video to the group. Ask: **Why would it not make sense for a player to score baskets for the opposing team?**

COMPARE: Emphasize that for a team to be effective, the players must work together.

Point out that just as helping the opposing team would harm your team, fighting within the team will cause problems. Discuss the similarities of Jesus's discussion to working together on any type of team, especially a sports team.

ASK: How is giving in to temptation similar to working for the opposing team? In what ways do people live in a divided kingdom when they allow Satan to develop strongholds in their lives? How does Jesus break those strongholds?

- **(3:23)** Jesus identified Satan as a real being and affirmed that his kingdom of evil is real. Jesus's words also revealed the contradictions behind the religious leaders' comments. If He was driving out demons with demonic power, Satan would be working against himself. Jesus emphasized that the only way a person could go in and take something from a stronger person would be to bind that person. In this case, Satan was the strong man, but Jesus demonstrated His superior power by dismantling Satan's work. The fact that He could cast out demons and defeat evil spirits provided evidence that He had the power and authority to free people from the oppression of sin that had been holding them in bondage.

TRANSITION: *In this last section, Jesus explained what it looks like for someone to work for the opposing team in His kingdom. He tackled a difficult subject, so let's look at what He means by opposing the Holy Spirit.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 3:28-30.

EXPLAIN: Refer to page 35 and the bulleted paragraph below to discuss the background surrounding the topic of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Discuss that Jesus is referring to someone who continually and persistently chooses to reject Christ. Remind the group that as long as someone is living, they still have the opportunity to repent and turn from their sins (1 John 1:9). *Yet once they die, they no longer have that opportunity. Jesus was providing a strong warning to the scribes that they needed to repent while they still had opportunity to do so.* Emphasize that He also admonished them to recognize His authority to forgive sins.

- **(3:28)** The religious leaders were putting themselves in a dangerous situation by attributing the works of Jesus to Satan. Jesus was cooperating with the Holy Spirit to cast out demons, but the scribes failed to distinguish between the works of Satan and what Jesus had done. Jesus called out the scribes because of their attitude and hostility toward the work of the Holy Spirit through Him. They were denying the redemptive power that Jesus had through the Spirit.

ASK: Why might a person refuse to accept the truth about Jesus? How would you counsel someone who was afraid they had gone too far to find God's forgiveness? (p. 31)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- *Believers should not be surprised when others are skeptical about Jesus.*
- *Believers can trust that Jesus has authority over all creation.*
- *Believers should be heartbroken when people reject Jesus.*

DISCUSS: Review the lesson passage and all the areas over which Jesus exercises authority. Discuss the Apply the Text questions on page 31.

ASK: In which of these areas (your mind, your body, your understanding of nature, and your mission in life) does Jesus now exercise authority? In which of them did you once recognize His authority but no longer are doing so?

CHALLENGE: Give each adult an index card and a pen. Direct them to write down one area in which they once recognized Jesus's authority but have reclaimed from Him at some point.

PRAY: On the back of the index card, instruct the group to write a prayer asking God to help them submit this area of their lives to Him. Encourage them to use this card as a prayer prompt throughout the coming week. Remind the group to use the **Daily Exploration** on pages 33-35 to go deeper into God's Word this week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group through email or text. Encourage adults to consider Jesus's authority over their daily lives.