

June 9th, 2024

Mark 3:20-35

Out of curiosity, I did a google images search: "Jesus and Satan." Other than the few images that depicted Jesus dribbling a basketball and Satan on floor holding his ankles, presumably because Jesus has dribbled the ball in such a way as to make Satan trip on himself- which is quite embarrassing, every single picture has something in common: Jesus and Satan are level. Jesus is here, and Satan is right across from him- as if they were equals- and that likely reflects common opinion. From what I've seen, I get the impression that most Christians, if they believe in Satan, likely think of him as Jesus' enemy- and they are constantly at battle, and perhaps Satan wins a few, Jesus wins a few, and ultimately, Jesus will win. *That is not the picture that the Bible gives.*

Already in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus has casted out demons, not by doing any kind of ritual or saying special words, but by telling them to go away- they obey him as their master. Also, just from what Mark has recorded so far in this Gospel, Jesus has been baptized- and when he was, God the Father proclaimed, "this is my Son" from the heavens. Jesus has not only given orders to demons, he has claimed the authority to forgive all sins- which means all sins that are committed are ultimately against him, he has declared himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath- the one who instituted the Sabbath. Already, Jesus has claimed to have divine authority and he's proven that he has divine power. He has claimed to be God, which means he is the creator of all things, including Satan himself. The conclusion that we must have, as we from today, is that **Jesus is Lord over Satan**. And in this text, we see **1. Two other opinions, 2. The Battle of Jesus, and 3. The True Family of Jesus.**

1. Two Other Opinions. We see at this point in Jesus' ministry that he's very popular- he's different from all the other religious teachers, and he can heal and cast out demons. Of course, he has his enemies- they don't like all this attention Jesus is getting. Jesus says too many big claims, he does too many big miracles, he's too controversial, he's too bold, he's making them nervous and uneasy. You thought I was talking about the Pharisees? No. I'm talking about his family. His own mother, brothers, and sisters were not fans. They didn't like that Jesus was doing all this. They knew him- they grew up with him! Mary gave birth to him! Mary, deep down, knew who Jesus was and what he came to do, but it was hard to see it all starting to happen! It was hard to see the most respected religious leaders hate him! It was hard to hear the things he said, "I can forgive all sins, I created the universe, I gave the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai, I'm the Son of Man (a way of him saying that he's going to descend from the Heavens on the last day and judge all people with the authority of God)." That's hard to hear from your brother! So, they say, "He's crazy!" Literally, "He's beside himself." They conclude that he is a lunatic- out of his mind. The other conclusion is the one that the religious experts from Jerusalem have- keep in mind, these are the leading experts, the most advanced religious authorities of God's Word, and they are confronted with a man who claims to be their God and creator and backs it up by miraculously healing and commanding demons to leave. They say, "no, he's not crazy- he's in league with Satan." They conclude that in order to have this kind of power and this kind of ability to cast out demons, that he

must have sold his soul to the Devil, and now the Devil is using him to trick people into following him- that's the only way this could be happening!

Okay. Let's address these claims. Jesus is insane. I don't know. Does he seem insane to you? His claims definitely are radical, but he backs them up! It would be one thing for him just to say it, but he backs his words up with action! Does he strike you as a person who's sold his soul to the Devil? Well, Jesus, knowing that if this malicious slander were to go unaddressed, it could lead people astray, addresses it head on. It's nonsense. When has Satan ever worked this way? Satan's whole goal is to cause as much pain and strife and horror as he can, and he was doing that by possessing people- why would he then give his authority to cast them out to this Jesus person? And, sure, Satan can make miraculous things happen- but why? To trick people into believing something false. So, if the experts are going to say that's what's happening here, they should then point to a specific teaching that Jesus is spreading that is satanic. But they can't, because he isn't. Everything he's said is in alignment with God's Word, even more than the Pharisees! So, Jesus isn't insane, he is lying on behalf of Satan, therefore, he must be who he says he is: The lord and creator of Satan, who has come to defeat him for good.

2. Jesus' Battle. Jesus' response to the experts shows how illogical they're being, but then he shows what's he's actually come to do. If Satan is going to be defeated, he isn't going to do it himself. If Satan is going to be defeated, someone is going to have to break into his realm, tie him up, and plunder him that way. What does he mean by that, what's Satan's "plunder?" You and me. Little did the pharisees or their teachers know, they were actually under the oppression of Satan, along with all humanity since the garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve listened to Satan and disobeyed God, and therefore brought eternal death upon themselves. Satan won- he had ruined God's perfect creation and made it so God had to condemn his perfect human beings- they would have to join him in Hell. But God immediately says, "You haven't won. In fact, you are going to have your foot crushed by someone that comes from the womb of a woman." And Jesus is saying, "I'm the one who has come to crush Satan's head, but in order to do so, he must strike my heel." Jesus is here to defeat evil forever, he is here to buy us back from the eternal hell we deserve, but how? How is he going to defeat evil? By letting himself be crushed by evil. He is destroyed by the wrath of God, and through the cross, he defeats Satan by paying the debt that Adam, Eve, and all of us owe to God. That's why Jesus came.

Therefore, as Jesus says, all sins will be forgiven. Okay, I know what Jesus says next, and you're likely wondering what that means, but can we first acknowledge the power of this verse- all sins will be forgiven, even blasphemies. The absolute worst things you have ever done, the things no one knows about but you, the things you've thought and you're grateful no one can read your mind, everything, the worst things, all forgiven. Even the blasphemies- which means speaking or acting disrespectfully against God, spitting in Jesus' face, that sort of thing, all forgiven! How? Because Jesus was already punished for that sin. There is no sin so bad that Jesus didn't pay for it, nor is there a sinner so lost, so evil, so depraved, that Jesus can't forgive them. On the contrary, the only way to not be forgiven, is to be too good for it. That's what Jesus addresses when he says the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is never

forgiven and that it's an eternal sin. Jesus isn't contradicting himself here. All sins can be forgiven. But the "sin" of rejecting forgiveness, rejecting the Gospel, saying, "I know forgiveness is free, but I don't want it for free- either because I don't need it or because I can pay for it myself," then that person won't be forgiven. Not because they weren't good enough, but because they were too good for forgiveness. This means that if any of you were to say, "I think I've committed the unforgivable sin," I'd say, "The proof that you're sorry for doing that proves that you haven't." Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable not because it's so bad, but because it rejects forgiveness.

3. That has profound implications for who Jesus' family actually is. Here's a spoiler- it's not the good people. Jesus' family, back in verse 21, were trying to "get" him, really the word in Greek is "sieze, take control of, capture," that idea. They wanted to control him. In a sense, that's what the religious leaders were doing to- instead of allowing the evidence to speak for itself and accepting the truth, they decided that Jesus must have sold his soul to the Devil- because he can't actually be who he says he is. Later on, when Jesus is teaching in the house, surrounded, presumably, a mix of his disciples and other followers, they tell him that his family is looking for him, and what Jesus says is absolutely shocking. "Who are my mother and brothers? The one who does God's will, who believes in me as their savior, they are my real brother and sisters." Wow. That would have been a shocking, biting thing for his family to hear, but it's true. What matters isn't blood, but faith, and faith in Jesus brings you into a relationship with him that changes everything- here's what I mean. This may shock you, but I don't think I'll be winning "Father of the Year" anytime soon. Last week, I was on the couch putting together today's worship service, and Dot started walking toward the end of the house with the office, bathroom, and *stairs to the basement*. I realized I didn't close the door to the basement, and I jumped up and screamed "Dorothea," and there she was, she walked right past it, and looked at me like I was crazy. The thing is, though, she has a father who is infinitely more powerful and knowledgeable than me, but who also loves her infinitely more than I ever could, and she is in his hands. And the same is true for you and me. You are a part of Jesus' family- in his death he forged a relationship with you, you are in his family. You are his brothers and sisters, and it's not the good ones who he gives this too. It's Matthew- the tax collector who cheated people out of their money for a living. It's Simon the Zealot- the violent Jewish rebel. It's Peter, the coward. It's Judas Isacariot, the greedy traitor. It's Mary Magdalene, the woman who had been demon possessed. They're former prostitutes. It's sinners. Later on, who would be the ones who enter God's family? It would be the thief on the Cross who repents at the last moment and Jesus says, "you'll be with me in paradise." It would be Jesus' brothers who did reject him, but later were his most passionate followers- James and Jude. Do you see a pattern here? Jesus doesn't seem to have much use for good people. It's the sinners that are called to be his brothers and sisters. Paul, the leading missionary and theologian for the early church, who wrote most of the New Testament, was a violent, bloodthirsty murderer who hunted Christians down. St. Augustine, a North African Christian theologian in the 400's, one of the most influential theologians ever who fought for free grace- that we can only be saved by God's grace, not by anything we do, he was a sex-addict and a drunkard before he became a Christian. Martin Luther- the one God used to bring his people back to the Gospel, before he rediscovered it, admitted that he hated God and wanted nothing to do with him. John Newton, the author of *Amazing*

Grace- he was a slave trader before he entered God's family. Do you see a pattern here? Because Jesus has crushed Satan and won us back, his family has enough room for everyone, but only enough room for sinners. Amen.