

Mental, Monster, or Majesty?

Jeff Rogers / Empty Nesters Bible Study
Mark 3:20-35

No doubt, you have heard someone say or read, “Jesus was a great teacher, but I do not believe He was the Son of God.” Or we hear, “Jesus was a good person, but...” Three possible options can be used to describe Jesus (Him, His ministry, work), and being a “good teacher” cannot logically be among them simultaneously.

He is either a lunatic, a liar, or He is Lord. In our text today, we see three groups of people who draw each one of these conclusions. His family discounts Him as delusional. The Scribes (Pharisees) denounce Him as demonic, and the third declares Him as divine.

In our conclusions about the Lord, no middle ground or neutral territory exists. In Matthew’s gospel account, we are told, **Matthew 12:30**, *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters*. In **Mark 9:40**, *For the one who is not against us is for us*. And then in **Luke 11:23**, *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters*.

I. Is Jesus Delusional? (Mark 3:20-21)

- A. The return to Capernaum (Mark 3:20)
 - 1. Jesus returns “home,” probably to Peter and Andrew’s house.
 - 2. News of His return quickly spreads, and a crowd gathers.
 - a) The healed and those who needed healing (Mark 1:32)
 - b) Everyone seeking Him (Mark 1:37)
 - c) Those curious and needy (Mark 1:45)
 - d) Mark 2:1-2
- B. The protective family (Mark 3:21)
 - 1. News of Jesus’ ministry traveled to His hometown of Nazareth (**Luke 4:14-15**).
 - a) Mary and those who believed (Luke 1:31-33; Luke 2:19, 51)
 - b) His half-brothers who did not believe (John 7:5)
 - (1) James (church leader, wrote the Epistle of James), Joses, Judas (wrote the book of Jude), and Simon. Also, at least two half-sisters. (Mark 6:3)
 - (2) When Jesus was 12 years old, He was amazing the teachers of Israel (Luke 2:46-47)
 - c) When Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth (Luke 2:16-29)
 - (1) They were filled with wrath because of His claims.
 - (2) They became bloodthirsty and attempted to murder Him.
 - 2. The Bold Assertion (Mark 3:21b)
 - a) *“He is out of his mind.”* - *existēmi* – To be insane; to be afflicted with mental derangement and not behaving responsibly.
 - b) Ultimately, His brothers would come to faith. Out of concern, duty, and pity, they determined to go to Capernaum and bring Him back to Nazareth.

II. Is Jesus Demonic? (Mark 3:22-30)

- A. The slandering scribes (**Mark 3:22**, *And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.”*)
 - 1. Their power was threatened (Mark 3:6)
 - 2. Their jealousy was awakened (Matthew 12:22-23)
 - 3. Their answer was denial (Matt 12:24) (The Scribes were not neutral arbiters. See John 8:30-47)
- B. The personal attack
 - 1. He is possessed by Beelzebul (the ruler of demons)
 - 2. Jesus’ power was either of God or Satan (Jesus brought certainty to this in **John 8:41, 44**)
- C. The Practical Parable
 - 1. Jesus’ use of parables obscured the truth from unbelievers (Matt 13:11-12).
 - 2. His parable pointed out the logical absurdity of the accusation. Casting out demons was a self-evident truth that Jesus did not come from Satan.

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3. The casting out of demons was proof of power over Satan (Mark 3:27) (Isaiah 49:24-25)
 - a) To take the property of a warrior or tyrant, he must first be defeated.
 - b) The strong man represents Satan; his property is the demonic forces and oppressed human beings under his control.
 - c) Only someone stronger than Satan could enter his kingdom, bind him, disperse his agents, and liberate the captives from the realm of darkness!
 - (1) **Colossians 1:13–14**, *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* (See also Ephesians 2:1-4)
 - d) Jesus' use of such power proved He is from God, who alone possesses such absolute authority. (Romans 16:20, Hebrews 2:14-15) *"The God of peace will soon crush Satan..."*
 - D. Unforgivable Blasphemy
 1. The warning - do not blaspheme the Holy Spirit.
 2. The walk – Jesus walked wholly in the power of the Spirit.
 - a) Jesus was perfectly submissive to His Father (John 4:34; 5:19–30)
 - b) Wholly empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1, 18; John 3:34; Acts 1:2; 10:38; Rom. 1:4)
 - c) The Spirit at work in His life
 - (1) His birth (Luke 1:35)
 - (2) His baptism (Mark 1:10)
 - (3) His temptation (Mark 1:12)
 - (4) His ministry (Luke 4:14)
 - (5) His miracles (Matt. 12:28; Acts 10:38)
 - (6) His death (Heb. 9:14)
 - (7) His resurrection (Rom. 1:4)
 3. Those who had seen the overwhelming evidence of the Spirit's power in Jesus' ministry yet remained utterly unwilling to accept Jesus as the Son of God—choosing instead to attribute the Spirit's empowering work to Satan—were guilty of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.
 4. No forgiveness is possible for those who refuse to stop rejecting Christ.

III. Is Jesus Divine? (Mark 3:31-35)

- A. Hearing the news of Jesus, Mary, and His brothers arrive in Capernaum (Mark 3:31) (**Luke 4:14-15**)
 1. After sending for Jesus (Mark 3:31), His response is, *"Who are my mother and my brothers?"*
 - a) This is not a response of ignorance; He knew His family members.
 - b) This is not a response of an unloving Son; He deeply loved His family (John 19:26-27)
 2. What was He speaking of in this exchange?
 - a) The only relationship to Him that matters eternally is not physical but spiritual (John 1:12; Rom 8:14-17; 1 John 3:1-2)
 - b) The only birth that matters eternally is the second birth (John 3:3-8)
 - c) Only those who heed God's word will be eternally blessed (Luke 11:27-28)
 - B. The new birth and true conversion are marked by an eagerness to obey Christ.
 1. An obedience to the Word of God and Christ's authority.
 2. Jesus explains the contrast between obedience and disobedience:
 - a) John 8:31, *"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."*
 - b) Later, he says, *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15)
 - c) By contrast, *"The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (1 John 2:4; cf. 3:24). Embracing Christ as Lord is more than mere lip service (cf. Matt. 7:21)
 - C. **Romans 10:9**, *Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
 1. Salvation and obedience are simultaneously simple and challenging.
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- D. Born in 1898, Clive Staples Lewis became one of the twentieth century's most widely known literary figures. Though raised in a Protestant Irish home, Lewis abandoned his childhood faith and embraced atheism when he was only fifteen. He thought he was done with God, being paradoxically “very angry at God for not existing” (C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* [London: Harvest Books, 1966], 115). But God was not finished with him. Years later, while teaching at Oxford University, Lewis found himself in the company of Christian friends who challenged his atheism. The Lord used their influence to draw Lewis to Himself. Reflecting on his conversion, the former atheist compared himself to the prodigal son, pursued by God despite his attempts to resist. He wrote:
1. *You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. (Ibid., 228–29)*
- E. As a Christian thinker, apologist, and author, C. S. Lewis would go on to have widespread influence through fictional works like *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Screwtape Letters*, and through apologetic writings like *The Problem of Pain* and *Mere Christianity*.
- F. One of Lewis’s most well-known contributions to the field of Christian apologetics was the “trilemma” he proposed regarding the claims of Jesus Christ. Though not invented by Lewis, he gave the “trilemma” its most popular expression. In response to anyone who might suggest that Jesus was a good teacher but not divine, Lewis explained why such an opinion was not logically tenable:
1. *I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronising nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God. (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* [London: Collins, 1952], 54–56)*
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