

Jesus Messiah: Seeing Christ In The Gospel Of Mark

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”
(Mark 1:15 ESV)*

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”
(Mark 15:38–39 ESV)*

A House Divided

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Mark 3:7-35

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Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Mark 3:7; that’s on page 838 in your pew Bibles. This morning we are going to look at a larger chunk of Scripture. For the last couple of weeks we’ve been looking at the 5 conflict stories, each in turn, and talking about how in these stories Jesus is pressing his identity and authority upon the Jews of his day. With each story the pressure mounted and mounted and then last week we saw Pharisaic Judaism begin to crack and divide under the strain. Something POPPED last week and Mark made sure that we didn’t miss it. He says:

The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.
(Mark 3:6 ESV)

There’s the break, right there and NOW Mark shows us how various groups of people begin to respond to Jesus Christ. We see 4 groups – 4 pictures of people responding variously to the identity and authority of Jesus.

Now in typical Jewish fashion, these pictures are not arranged in linear order – they don’t go from worst to first – they are just laid out for us to observe and to reflect upon and so that is what we will do. We’ll take a look at each of these groups and then we’ll reflect a little bit and ask where we are in terms of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

Hear now the Word of the Lord:

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. 9 And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, 10 for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. 11 And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” 12 And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

13 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons. 16 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

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.” 23 And he called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

28 “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— 30 for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” 33 And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3:7–35 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Well as I said that’s a larger chunk of Scripture so we’ll have to take the forest level view and deal with these groups rather briefly. The first group we notice is the one Mark calls:

A Great Crowd

We read about them in verses 7-12. Three things stand out about this group.

1. They were a mile wide and an inch deep

Mark says that they came Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem and Idumea. That’s a long way away!

Idumea is almost 200 km from where this story takes place and there were people from even

further away than that. There were people from beyond the Jordan, from Tyre and Sidon in modern day Syria – there is widespread interest in the power of Jesus Christ. That’s what Mark is saying.

However, and Mark makes this very clear – their interest in Jesus is only skin deep. That’s the second thing we would want to say about these folks:

2. They are interested only in healing

Look carefully at what Mark says about them:

When the great crowd heard all that he was **doing**, they came to him. (Mark 3:8 ESV)

They didn’t come for the teaching – they came for the miracles. There is no mention in this story about anyone from this group **LEARNING** anything from Jesus. This group is actually portrayed as an aggressive and unruly mob. Look at verses 9-10:

he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, 10 for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. (Mark 3:9–10 ESV)

This is a mob of people jostling Jesus in order to get something from him. At first glance we might think that Mark’s first picture is a picture of believers but as we look closer we discover that it isn’t. James Edwards puts it this way:

The crowd is a paradox. Its needs command Jesus’ attention, and Jesus is fully attentive to the misery present in its numbers, but its clamor is not a response of faith.¹

These people don’t know who Jesus is – in fact in this story they know less about Jesus than the demons.

3. They know less about Jesus than the demons

Look at verse 11:

¹James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 104.

whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” (Mark 3:11 ESV)

The demons knew who he was, but no one in the crowd picked that up. No one asked any questions about that. They came for a healing – not complex Christology. They weren’t interested in all that doctrine stuff. Now, to be clear, doctrine alone doesn’t save us; James says that. He says:

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (James 2:19 ESV)

You’ve got some basic theology? You know as much as the demons? That’s not enough! Knowing some basic facts about Jesus does not constitute saving faith – and yet here is what’s crazy about this crowd - these people don’t even have that. They don’t even have the faith of demons. They don’t want even want the basic facts about Jesus – they just want to have their needs met BY Jesus. They want Santa Jesus – they want presents and having received those presents THEY GO HOME.

The second group that we see here we is labelled in my Bible:

The Twelve Apostles

This is the first time in Mark’s Gospel that the 12 Disciples are also called Apostles. Now there is a lot we could say about this group but again this is more of a forest level survey today so I’m just going to say three things.

1. They were called to Christ

Jesus went up on the mountain and he called to himself those whom he desired. In Greek it literally says, “he summoned those whom he willed”.² It is hard to get away from the Sovereignty of God with respect to our calling as disciples of Jesus. Jesus said:

You did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16 ESV)

² So Edwards page 111.

The emphasis in the Bible is always on the Sovereign Election of God – and we see that right here at the foundational level. The newly constituted covenant community is made up solely of those chosen and called by Christ.

They are called BY Christ and notice too that they are called TO Christ. The reason Jesus called them was:

so that they might be with him (Mark 3:14 ESV)

Unlike the crowds, the disciples did not come to Jesus as a means to an end – they came to Jesus as an end in himself. Jesus HIMSELF was the object of their coming. He was what they were looking for.

The second thing we would want to say about this group is that:

2. They are made the foundation of the new covenant community

I mentioned last week that it is not an accident that in the immediate aftermath of the decisive break with Judaism we see Jesus choosing and appointing 12 Apostles. The symbolism of that would have been very hard to miss. One commentator puts it this way, he says:

“The number twelve has a clear redemptive-historical significance. The Twelve represent in a new form the people of the twelve tribes, Israel.”³

Jesus is starting a new covenant community and these 12 patriarchs will serve as the foundation with Christ himself as cornerstone.

The third thing we would want to say about these folks is that:

3. They are equipped to preach the Gospel with extraordinary power

³ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 133.

Now I've used the phrase "extraordinary power" because there is something special about the Apostles. The Apostles represent the foundation of the church – there is something essentially unrepeatable about a foundation. No matter how tall your house is – it can only have 1 foundation. So there is something unique here about the authority that is given to this group.

Now this is CLEARER in Luke's account of this same story. Luke provides a follow up story that Mark doesn't. So in Luke 9 we have the same story we are reading here in Mark 3. Luke says:

he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. (Luke 9:1–2 ESV)

Ok, that is the same story. But then in Luke 10 Jesus sends out some "other disciples". Some disciples who are NOT apostles. Notice what is missing:

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. (Luke 10:1 ESV)

What's missing? The extraordinary POWER! Now these folks had power; they had the power of the PREACHED GOSPEL and it had authority over the demonic but there is no mention of THEM having that power invested in them. So, long story short, I think we can agree that the Apostles had UNIQUE POWER AND AUTHORITY but that all disciples exercise authority when they preach the Apostolic Gospel.

Now there is more we could say about that, but this is a forest level look so let's turn our attention to the third group now that we see in this story. These folks we might label:

The Determined Opponents

We can say less about these folks because we've been dealing with them for the last 5 weeks. They are the Pharisees and the Scribes. These are the folks who decided in our last story, last Sunday, that Jesus had to die. Very quickly we'll notice 3 things about them.

1. They accuse Jesus of being demonic

That's in verse 22. You see the Rabbis understood that the people were well aware now that Jesus AND his Apostles were exercising extraordinary power. They can't deny that. People have been healed. People have had demons cast out of them. They aren't going to be able to convince people that Jesus is a charlatan – too many people now have FIRST HAND experience of his power. Its real BUT they say, its not from God. He is doing this in the power of the devil – that's the counter proposal that they offer to the people.

Jesus isn't the Son of God – he is the Prince of Demons!

Now, Jesus obviously fires back at this suggestion. First he shows how ridiculous it is. Why would the devil use his power to dismantle his own house? Jesus has been going around kicking out demons and knocking down strongholds and setting captives free. He has been PLUNDERING the devil. Why would the devil plunder the devil? That's ridiculous. That's insane and the Pharisees know it.

That leads us to the second thing we can say about this group.

2. They are worried about losing their position

This isn't about the evidence for the claims of Christ – the evidence has been solid and incontrovertible. They've had a front row seat for healing after healing and inspired insight after inspired insight. They've seen the evidence – but they have also understood the consequences. If Jesus is who he says he is then their days atop the mountain of Judaism are officially over. That's what this is about and they admit as much. In John 11 they have a little war council to discuss what to do about Jesus. They say:

If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. (John 11:48 ESV)

This wasn't about protecting the people from a false teacher this was about protecting their own positions of power and privilege.

The last thing we want to say about these folks is that:

3. They wilfully ignore the truth

That was what made Jesus so angry in the story we read last week. Mark says:

he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart (Mark 3:5 ESV)

I mentioned last week that the word “hardness” here means literally “obdurate stupidity”.⁴ It means DECIDING to believe something in order to avoid obvious consequences. That is what is going on here and Jesus calls it the unforgiveable sin, in verse 29. He says:

whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” (Mark 3:29 ESV)

Now I know that a lot of Christians – particularly new Christians worry about committing the unforgiveable sin, so I’m going to give you a reliable definition. You can write this down if you need to. According to well respected Evangelical scholar William Lane:

“In this historical context, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit denotes conscious and deliberate rejection of the saving power and grace of God released through Jesus’ word and action.”⁵

If you CONSCIOUSLY and DELIBERATELY reject the saving power and grace of God released through Jesus’ word and action you are guilty of an eternal sin. Now let me point out the obvious, a disciple of Jesus – by definition – cannot commit this sin. A disciple is someone who has done the very opposite.

Let’s talk about those people now – let’s talk about:

The Household Of Faith

We see these people in verses 31-35. Let’s notice 3 things about them.

1. They are the true brothers and sisters and mothers of Jesus Christ

⁴ R.T. France citing the definition of Mann in *The Gospel Of Mark*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 151.

⁵ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 145.

There is a contrast presented here between the biological family of Jesus and the REAL family of Jesus. The biological family of Jesus is presented here in this story as OUTSIDE the circle of faith. Literally and metaphorically – that’s what Mark says. He says that Jesus’ mother and brothers are STANDING OUTSIDE in verse 31. They don’t yet understand who Jesus is. They want to take Jesus home before he stirs up anymore trouble. But Jesus ignores them. He leaves them outside and he points to the inner circle of his disciples and he says here are my brothers, and my sisters and my mothers. Isn’t that amazing?

Listen to me very carefully because this is one of the Bible truths that North American Christians struggle to hear. According to the Bible the Christian family IS PRIMARY over even the biological family. That’s what this text is saying! This isn’t an inference or a tricky bit of preaching, this is straight up Jesus. He said this stuff all the time. He said:

Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother (Luke 12:51–53 ESV)

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:26 ESV)

I know this hard to hear, but it couldn’t be any clearer. This is Jesus saying that I am making a new family and it will tear old families apart. I KNOW THAT and I have factored that in to the cost.

The second thing we want to say about this group is that:

2. They are focused on the person of Jesus Christ

You really notice this when you contrast the disciples with the crowd earlier in the chapter – that’s why I decided to do all these together. The crowd came and got what they needed from Jesus and left – THESE PEOPLE STUCK AROUND! They are sitting with Jesus and they are hanging on every word – you can see the contrast! These people have come to KNOW and BELIEVE that Jesus is the Holy One of God. So they stayed. And they are FOCUSED on the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Last thing we want to say about these folks is that:

3. They are characterized by obedience

Jesus says that here in verse 35 and he says it in multiple other places. He says in John 14 for example:

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. (John 14:21 ESV)

The disciples of Jesus are people who love and obey Jesus – that’s fundamental to the definition. Not perfectly, but increasingly, the household of faith is characterized by obedience.

Now in the few minutes that we have left I want to ask the question I think we are supposed to ask. I think Mark the Evangelist wants us to ask an evangelistic question and it is this: Which group are you in? How are you responding to the claims of Jesus Christ? Are you in or are you out? Are you opposing Christ? Or are you USING Christ? Are you part of the crowd? Or are you in that inner circle; sitting at the feet Jesus, hanging on every word? Are you in or out?

And of course the scary thing is that the Bible says that many people who are OUT think that they are IN – Jesus says that in Matthew 7 and Paul challenges the people in Corinth saying:

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. (2 Corinthians 13:5 ESV)

So some people think they are in when in fact they are OUT. So how can you know? Well I think this story can help us. I think it generates at least 4 diagnostic questions that we can use to help us discover whether we are IN or OUT. Let me walk you through them.

Four Diagnostic Questions

1. Do you desire to be with Jesus?

The Apostles were called to BE WITH JESUS. The picture we are given of the household of faith

is a picture of a bunch of people sitting around with JESUS. Jesus wasn't healing people in the story, according to the longer version in Matthew 12 he was just teaching, he was just speaking and they were hanging on his every word.

Here is the point. Are you here to get something from Jesus or are you here for Jesus? Is Jesus a means to something else for you? A healthier body? A better job? More money? A better family? Peace of mind? Or are you just here for Jesus?

I remember a couple of years ago when we had some remarkable healings and all of the sudden we had 20-30 extra folks – folks I'd never seen before who came because they heard that the POWER OF GOD was moving through this place. And then, the healings stopped for a while and those people disappeared. They came for the power – they came for the show – and then they left. I'm convinced that's why God gives and then doesn't give miraculous healings. Because it makes the POWER chasers move around from church to church and finally they exhaust themselves and they SIFT themselves right out of the kingdom of God. And those who are here primarily for the PRESENCE – if they stick around – they get the power too. Because God is a good God and he does give good gifts TO HIS PEOPLE.

So why are you here? Are you here for the gifts or are you here for the Giver?

The second question I think you should ask is this:

2. Do you desire to learn from Jesus?

The crowd people – they didn't listen to anything Jesus said. They just wanted to touch him, feel the power and get out. I've been to churches where the sermon was remarkably brief and perfunctory. You could tell, these folks came for the power and had no interest in hearing from Jesus. The Pharisees; they didn't want to hear from Jesus either. Too many nasty and unpleasant implications. What about you? What are you here for? Did you come for some help raising your kids? Did you stick them downstairs so that other people could teach them something while you put in time up in the service? Is that you? Or are you hanging on every Word – are you desperate to hear from Jesus in the preaching of the Word, in the singing of the songs, in the encouragement of the people and in the drama of the sacraments? Are you LISTENING for the

Word of God? Because that kind of hearing is CHARACTERISTIC of true believers:

this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. (Isaiah 66:2 ESV)

Is that you? Because if its not, then you may not be a disciple.

3. Do you desire to speak about Jesus?

The Apostles had extraordinary power to go along with their preaching, but every true disciple is called to preach. The word translated as “preaching” here means “public proclamation”. I’m doing it right now – but so are you every time you share the Gospel in Tim Hortons. There is no such thing as a silent Christian. The Bible says:

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:10 ESV)

Faith isn’t faith if it stays in your heart. It has to come out of your mouth – it has to be shared or it isn’t real.

So what about you? Are you sharing? Did you take the 2 week challenge? Or did you forget again? Are you speaking to your friends and loved ones? Because real faith CAN’T KEEP QUIET. Paul said

“I believed, and so I spoke” (2 Corinthians 4:13 ESV)

How does a believer keep his mouth shut? He doesn’t Paul says. He believes AND SO HE SPEAKS. Is that you? If it isn’t you then you might still be outside.

4. Do you desire to obey Jesus?

Do you hate sin more today than you did 5 years ago? 10 years ago? 20 years ago? Do you sin less and hate sin more than when you first believed? The Bible does not expect perfect obedience from anyone other than Jesus Christ – but it does expect increasing obedience. It expects a trajectory of change.

we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV)

If the Holy Spirit is in you, you will change. Slowly but surely, by one degree of glory to the next – because this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Thanks be to God.

Challenge:

So how did you do? Are you inside or outside? If you are inside, then come further in and further up. Grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ! Grow in your salvation gifts and graces! But if you are outside, then why not cross over even today? Jesus is the GATE. He is the DOOR and the DOOR IS WIDE OPEN. Today is still the day of salvation – whether there will be a tomorrow for you, I do not know. But if you are here then I say to you now: COME. The Spirit and the Bride say COME. Whosoever will – the Bible says – may come. So come. Come! Come unto Jesus and be saved. Let me pray for us.