



## Polling The Divinity of Jesus

Mark 3:7-12

TO: LEGISLATORS

FROM: RALPH DROLLINGER

DATE: MAY 3, 2010

I am looking forward to our first in-person

**MEMBERS WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY  
FAMILY ROOM OF THE CAPITOL  
STARTING JUNE 8.**

For thinking and scheduling purposes please have your staff note the following: The dinner buffet will start after the last vote of your first-votes-back (either on Monday or Tuesday nights). The Bible study will begin punctually 15 minutes after the close of the last vote.

*Member's spouses always welcome.*

*My sincere desire is to nourish you spiritually via serious, challenging Bible study each week during session. We both know that your schedules are crazy. Therefore I believe Danielle and I can best serve you by being a reliable, constant "outpost" (among others) for your spiritual sustenance. In that the Word of God should be the foundational source for all of your reasoning in all of your life it follows that a regular feasting on His Word should be a habit that you are constantly reinforcing. I am reminded of what the Psalmist said in this regard, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers" (1:2-3). Accordingly I am here to coach, coax and poke into your side my long boney index finger in order to foster your spiritual maturation. As you can see by my past weekly printed notes, I am committed to preparation so that our time together will be profitable, enjoyable, and definitely worth your time. May God help us to grow your soul in godliness. The capitol—especially right now—is not a place for spiritual atrophy. See you June 8 for dinner!*

### INTRODUCTION

Last week we examined the first portion of Mark, chapter three. If you remember, I developed for your consideration

*Six Right Responses to Unjust Accusations*, a study certainly warranted by the Markian text. As I have continued to ponder last week's passage, several other insights come to mind that I think are fascinating and worth mention in follow-up. First, is the macro perspective of the whole passage; it is

unmistakable that Jesus was doing good. He was healing a man with a withered hand! But as good as His service was others still managed to find fault with Him. It amazes me that people can see your heart as a legislator, the overall tenor and long hours of your service, and still manage to attempt to call you for some ticky-tacky foul (to use a basketball term). And if that weren't enough, they'll drive on your supposed "sin" to derail your career. Similarly, in our recent studies we have witnessed the nefarious Pharisees desperately wanting to pin something on Jesus in order to assassinate Him (cf. 3:6). How many times have people tried to assassinate your character and/or reputation, if not threaten your life? Last week's passage serves to staggeringly illustrate the reality of the biblical doctrines of hamartiology (the doctrine of sin) and ponerology (the doctrine of evil). Perhaps we ourselves have done the above to others? The heart of man—our hearts—are desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9) and in need of the Savior's cleansing.

Secondly, remember what Jesus said in response to the critical spirit of the Pharisees (3:4), "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?" What does He intend by including the words "harm" and "kill"? After all, this second part of His question seems at first reading to have nothing to do with His healing of the man with the withered hand? "Harm" and "kill" are Jesus' words that relate back to Himself. Jesus is turning the table on His adversaries once again. In essence He is omnisciently saying, "Let me get this right, you are exclaiming that it is unholy for Me to heal on the Sabbath, but it is okay for you to murder (Me) on the Sabbath? Did I get this right?" (Cf. 3:6). Jesus traps them in their own legalism; He entangles them in the hypocrisy of their own faulty logic. Tongued-tied they are left speechless. Being on the side of truth has a way of doing that. Now let us shift our attention to this week's passage:

### THE PASSAGE: MARK 3:7-12

*And Jesus withdrew to the sea with His disciples; and a great multitude from Galilee followed; and also from Judea, 8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude heard of all that He was doing and came to Him. 9 And He told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the multitude, in order that they might not crowd Him; 10 for He had healed many, with the result that all those who had afflictions pressed about Him in order to touch Him. 11 And whenever the unclean spirits beheld Him, they would fall*



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*down before Him and cry out, saying, "You are the Son of God!" 12 And He earnestly warned them not to make Him known.*

What is the contextual flow of this passage? Why does Mark transition into this narrative after five illustrations of pharisaical reluctance to ascribe messianic credentialing to Jesus? It is this: today's passage ascribes messianic deity to Jesus from the demons. Mark is saying, if who Jesus is, is not obvious to the religious leaders of the day, it certainly is to the demonic world! The demons verified what the Pharisees denied: "...You are the Son of God!" (v.11b). "Mark probably intended to contrast what the demons acknowledged as a fact with what the religious leaders were not willing to consider as a possibility."<sup>1</sup>

## HOW ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU WILLING TO ASCRIBE DEITY TO JESUS?

As we will see, the problem with confessing divinity to Jesus is the implications of His authority in one's life that naturally follows. The hermeneutical genre of this passage is narratival; it is therefore quite self-explanatory. The contextual crux (that is to say the intent of the Holy Spirit prompting Mark to include this passage in the canon of Scripture) pertains to this being a two-fold illustration punctuating the authority of Christ: His preeminence over previously-cited pharisaical denunciations, as well as (as seen at the conclusion of our passage) demonic subordination. It is therefore most profitable for us to have a close understanding of verse 11.

### I. THE PHONY ASCRIPTION

*And whenever the unclean spirits beheld him.*

Demons possessed people more routinely in ancient cultures than today. The possessed were referred to as demoniacs. These were "unfortunate men possessed by unclean spirits whose behavior betrayed dominion by a will alien to their own."<sup>2</sup> The unclean spirits then were demons housed in individuals who to some degree hijacked the possessed individuals' voice. The Greek word for **beheld him** *theorein* is a word used in John's gospel frequently. Mark uses it seven times. It describes "almost belief." It is "detached observation or spectating." It is to watch without any sense of conviction. Another way of saying this is that the demons recognize but do not participate. They admit to His deity but do not submit to His authority.

### II. THE FACTUAL ACTUALITY

*They would fall down before Him and cry out, saying*

Unwilling to bow the knee or obey Christ, they were nonetheless subordinate to the authority of the Savior. The Greek word for **fall down before** *prospiptein* conveys the image of an inferior prostrating himself in homage<sup>3</sup> before a superior. Picture this: in relationship to the recalcitrant stubbornness of the Pharisees, the demoniac's physical posture and ensuing confession renders the deity debate into a no-contest event. James 2:19b serves to further amplify our point of application: "...the demons also believe and shudder." The point? To confess His deity without bowing to His authority is to live a life in restless utter fear of the implications.

### III. THE FORCED ADMISSION

*"You are the Son of God!"*

To this point in Mark's gospel there is no concrete clarity that the disciples understand the deity and authority of Christ.<sup>4</sup> "In addition to the Father (1:11), the demons are the only other party so far in Mark to confess Jesus' divine Sonship (1:24; 3:11; 5:7). Their doing so in the presence of the disciples [cf. 3:7] in this instance accentuates the incompleteness of the disciples' knowledge of Jesus."<sup>5</sup> Note the following summary:

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS POLL			
Person	Divinity	Authority	Passage
God:	Yes	Yes	Mark 1:11
Demons:	Yes	No	Mark 3:11
Pharisees:	No	No	Mark 2:7
Disciples:	Undecided	Undecided	Mt.16:13-17

### APPLICATION

It is a difficult position to believe that Jesus is God without bowing to His authority. The unbeliever's solution? Create a *supposed* intellectual barrier to belief. Is it not more convenient to deny His deity than to rebel against His authority? What about you? How do you vote regarding the divinity and authority of Jesus? Will you confess and submit? I pray so.

<sup>1</sup> Brooks, James A. *Mark, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991) p. 70

<sup>2</sup> Lane, William L *The Gospel of Mark, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1974) p. 130

<sup>3</sup> M & W: "A man acknowledges himself the man or vassal of a lord and recognizes the rights and duties inherent in this relationship."

<sup>4</sup> In Matthew 16:13-17 Peter is the first disciple to confess Jesus as the Son of God. Stereophonically, this event would have occurred later in Mark's gospel chronology had he included it.

<sup>5</sup> Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) p. 104